

STARS AND STRIPES®

Pingpong making comeback

Scene magazine



Teachers wait half a year for goods from Bahrain

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Pro-Bowl year earns Brees \$8M contract

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San Diego QB Drew Brees

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SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2005

\$1.00

U.S. investigating wounding of freed Italian journalist in Iraq

Intel agent killed when U.S. troops fired on car at checkpoint

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Finding new jobs no sweat for injured vets

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Washington Post

Capt. Lonnie Moore, right, wounded in Iraq in April 2004 and expected to remain at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington through March, already has gotten a few job offers. Moore and 1st Lt. Stephen Rice from Godfrey, Ill., who was wounded in Iraq in December 2003, work together during a physical therapy session. Injured veterans are in high demand among contractors who say many of the skills acquired in the military are applicable in the private sector.

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bounces back

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Blake murder trial: Jurors in the Robert Blake murder trial spent about 90 minutes deliberating before going home for the weekend.

They started their work Friday in Los Angeles after hearing the actor's lawyer, M. Gerald Schwartzbach, portray the prosecution's key witnesses as liars and accuse the police of rushing to judgment while bungling the investigation. Deliberations are scheduled to resume Monday.

Antichrist murder case: A father who said he murdered his son because he believed the 4-year-old was the Antichrist was sentenced Friday to life in prison without parole.

Ivan Henk pleaded guilty in Papillion, Neb., last month to first-degree murder, a crime he acknowledged during a 2003 court hearing when he shouted to the boy's mother that he killed Brendan Gonzalez "because he was the Antichrist. He had 666 on his forehead."

Tobacco lawsuit: A jury on Friday cleared tobacco maker Philip Morris of liability in the death of a man who smoked 35 years and alleged the company misled him by failing to acknowledge the habit was addictive and caused cancer.

Fredric Reller, 64, first sued Philip Morris in November 2001. A jury cleared the nation's biggest cigarette maker last August of negligence and misrepresentation in the lawsuit, but deadlocked on one count claiming the company fraudulently concealed the dangers of smoking.

Flight attendant bomb threat: An off-duty flight attendant accused of leaving a bomb note on an airplane has pleaded guilty to intentionally interfering with a flight crew, federal pro agreement that was filed Friday in federal prosecutors said Friday.

Prosecutor Debra T. Phillips said Gay Wilson accepted a plea agreement that was filed Friday in federal court in Nashville.

Gabor crash lawsuit: Zsa Zsa Gabor, who was seriously injured in a 2002 car crash, has settled her lawsuit against the driver for \$2 million, her attorney said Friday.

Gabor, 88, suffered broken bones in the November crash and received stitches to close wounds to her head, hands, arms and legs. The film and television actress was a passenger in the front seat of a car that struck a light pole on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood.

Fla. right-to-life case: State welfare officials are investigating about 30 allegations that Michael Schiavo abused, neglected or exploited his wife, Terri, the severely brain-damaged woman whose life he has been fighting to end, according to a court document made public Friday.

In the petition filed last week, the state Department of Children & Families asked the judge who ordered Terri Schiavo's feeding tube removed on March 18 to postpone his order until the agency can investigate 34 pages of materials documenting the alleged abuse of Terri Schiavo.

Religious Gibson stalker: An Idaho driver who claimed he was on a mission from



U.S. tsunami aid: Anna Gorski introduces four-month-old Tristan to his father, Petty Officer 1st Class Chad Gorski on Friday after the USS Abraham Lincoln pulled into its home port of Everett, Wash. It was the first time Gorski had seen his son in person, as he had been on board the Lincoln since it left in October 2004 for a four-month deployment in the western Pacific. It was diverted in December to south Asia, where it was the hub of a relief operation to help victims of the devastating Dec. 26 tsunami.

God to pray with actor-director Mel Gibson was convicted of felony stalking Friday in Los Angeles.

Jurors deliberated for less than three hours before finding 34-year-old Zack Sinclair guilty. He could face 3 years in prison.

Gruesome windshield death: An appeals court upheld the murder conviction of a woman who hit a homeless man with her car and then left him to die after he became lodged in her windshield.

The 2nd Court of Appeals in Fort Worth, Texas, upheld Chanté Mallard's conviction Thursday. Her attorney had argued that the evidence was legally and factually insufficient to convict her in the death of Gregory Glenn Biggs.

Falwell hospitalization: The Rev. Jerry Falwell left a Lynchburg hospital Friday morning after a stay of almost two weeks while he battled pneumonia.

"I'm a little hoarse, but I'm alive and well and glad to hear from you," Falwell said from his Lynchburg home, where his family gathered Friday.

World

Iran nuclear program: Iran said Saturday it will never agree to permanently stop making nuclear fuel and warned that a more unstable Middle East would result from a bid to halt Tehran before the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

Any effort by Washington to bring Tehran's suspended uranium enrichment program under the Security Council scrutiny is

a dangerous path, warned Hasan Rowhani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator.

War on terrorism

Training Iraqi troops: Germany will train 250 more Iraqi soldiers in the United Arab Emirates, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said Saturday, signaling further cooperation with the United States from an ally that strongly opposed the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Germany will send 70 military trainers to the United Arab Emirates in April and May for the new round of training, Schroeder said during a stop in Abu Dhabi, capital of the Emirates.

Pakistan militants hunt: Pakistani troops raided a militant hide-out Saturday in a remote tribal area near Afghanistan, triggering a shootout that left two foreigners dead and 11 people arrested, an army spokesman said. The troops also seized a large number of weapons in the raid near Miran Shah, the main town in northwest Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal region, said Maj. Gen. Shaikat Sultan.

Guantanamo investigation: The commander of the U.S. detention center for terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, said Friday he suspended three Army officers accused of "personal misconduct."

Brig. Gen. Jay W. Hood, commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, said he suspended two lieutenant colonels and one colonel and referred an allegation against a fourth officer to the Army.

Stories and photo from wire services

Correction

In a story in Friday's editions about wounded reservists protesting poor health care, Army Deputy Surgeon General Maj. Gen. Joseph Webb was incorrectly identified.

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'Borrowing, buying and begging'

DODDS teachers incurring thousands of dollars in unexpected expenses waiting for household goods

BY SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

Nearly eight months after seeing her household goods shipped off, Kardice Brown still is awaiting six of seven crates containing her belongings.

Two fellow Department of Defense Dependents Schools teachers fared better; they got their stuff after nearly six months of waiting.

The worst of it, the teachers said, is that they have incurred thousands of dollars in unexpected expenses for which they will see no reimbursement.

The saga started this summer when the three were transferred from Bahrain to other DODDS-Europe schools after terrorism threats prompted the U.S. military to evacuate dependents from the Persian Gulf country. In mid-September, it made an assignment to Bahrain an unaccompanied tour.

When the schools' student population dropped from 700 to about 390, so did the need for teachers, said Linda Curtis, superintendent of the DODDS Isles District. No dependents of military personnel attend the school; students are children of State Department employees or international, tuition-paying students.

Some teachers were moved to other schools.

Their household goods did not always follow as planned.

"Borrowing, buying and begging," Brown said in describing her first six months as a fourth-grade teacher at Lajes Elementary School in the Azores.

The problem of the delayed



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPHER SIX/Stars and Stripes

shipment is limited to those three teachers, whose goods were lost in the shuffle of disorder of a base in the midst of evacuating its non-essential residents and a Navy "crew swap" on base, said Lt. Cmdr. Darryl Gordon, personal property officer in Bahrain.

The teachers' goods were "caught in the stop-movement order," caused by the evacuation. "Because of the evacuation, we didn't want any dependents' shipments moving into the area," Gordon said. "In a stop-movement, everything is stopped and then we go back to each and every one to unblock and redirect."

The DODDS employees' shipments are handled by the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, the same organization that moves military personnel.

Usually, those moving through a permanent change of station are told to expect to receive their household goods within 60 days of movers packing them up.

Sixty days came and went for Sam Ochianing and his family, who transferred to Incirlik High School in Turkey, and had prepared to live in the warmer climates of the Middle East.

But the cold winter in Turkey forced them to invest in winter clothing, and their shipment gone astray required that they buy linens, cookware and rent a car, Ochianing said.

The only funds available to offset moving costs are four months of Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance, paid to cover costs such as meals and laundry.

"There is no other fund that kicks in" to reimburse them for expenditures because of the delayed shipments, said Tom Ellinger, DODDS Mediterranean District superintendent.

Steve Osborne, European director for the Overseas Federation of Teachers, is representing the teachers in an appeal for reimbursement, but said he's not hopeful they'll prevail because no remedy exists within the military, education or transportation systems for such expenditures.

Treasured items missing

When the U.S. military closed Bahrain to dependents because of terrorist threats, several teachers were moved to new Department of Defense Dependents Schools.

In the case of three of them, their household goods became delayed in the shuffle. As a result, the teachers have had to go through a chaotic winter and months of teaching without many of their possessions.

In 17 years of teaching, Kardice Brown, rerouted from Bahrain to Lajes Elementary School in the Azores, has developed quite a collection of resource materials she uses to teach her fourth-grade students.

That's what she says she misses most among the seven crates of household goods floating somewhere on the planet.

She's been told her goods were in Bahrain at one point, and for a reason no one has been able to explain, now are somewhere in the United States.

"I've been told a lot of things. None of them good explanations," said Brown, 38. "I'm old, old and tired and just don't want to deal with this anymore."

When the Bahrain school was closed, it ended Kathy Sweeney's hope of finishing her long teaching career in a country she'd always dreamed of living in.

Because of her narrow field as a reading specialist, Sweeney was redirected to her only option within the DODDS system. This fall, she started her 28th year with DODDS by taking a job at La Maddalena Elementary School on the Italian island of Sardinia.

Sam Ochianing, shifted to Incirlik High School in Turkey, is entitled to seek monetary compensation for damage to some of his household goods that finally arrived. But he'll never recoup the sentimental price for the ruined baseball cards and Marvel superhero comic books his now-college-aged son has collected since childhood, he said.

He hasn't yet told his son, away at school in California. He's looking for the right words.

"I'll tell him," Ochianing sighed. "I'll be as straightforward as possible."

— Sandra Jontz

exists within the military, education or transportation systems for such expenditures.

"I don't think there's much we

can do, but we're trying to recoup some of the costs they had to pay out," Osborne said.

E-mail Sandra Jontz at: jontzs@mail.estrp.osd.mil

DODDS parents, teachers debate evolution vs. creationism

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

So far, the Department of Defense Education Activity is a bystander in the battle to teach an alternative to evolution in the science classroom.

"We have not been approached by people asking that we include creationism or intelligent design into the curriculum," said Kim Day, who is in charge of the science curriculum for DODEA schools, where instruction in evolution is in line with national standards.

However, the battle is under way in at least 18 states: add either one or both alternatives to science lessons. Creationism accepts the Bible's claim that the universe has changed little since God created it a few thousand years ago. Intelligent design suggests that nature's complexity required some intelligent guiding hand.

In Maryland, a school board member was outvoted in his attempt to offer an alternative to evolution while Kansas residents are debating a proposal that intelligent design be added to the science curriculum.

A judge in Georgia recently ruled unconstitutional the two-year-old practice of placing stickers on science textbooks that claim evolution is a theory, not a fact. Debates continue in other states, all asking that Charles Darwin's idea of evolution be placed alongside a more religious-based alternative.

Some parents of Department of Defense Dependents Schools students would like to see an alternative to evolution offered, but have made no attempt to force a curriculum change.

"If you're going to allow [evolution] to be taught, use all of science," said Maj. Mark Kerr of the 100th Logistics Readiness Squadron at RAF Mildenhall, England.

There is, he said, evidence that disproves evolution, but that proof is absent from the curriculum. He and his wife, Amy, send their kids to DODDS schools, but teach creationism at home.

Greg Klaes, a science teacher at Lakenheath Middle School at RAF Feltwell, England, said creationism and intelligent design have no place in his classroom.

"They are not science," he said. He said science is a search for

truth. Creationists believe they have found the truth, he said, and intelligent design rules out the randomness of nature.

When his students bring up God's role in anything scientific, Klaes said, "I explain to them that discussions about religion stop at the door frame."

Staff Sgt. Josh and Denise Sandifer can cite several reasons why they teach their children at home, and evolution's place in the DODDS curriculum is one of them.

"I don't believe in evolution," Josh Sandifer said. "I believe what the Bible teaches."

Both Kerr and Sandifer, who is with the 100th Maintenance Squadron at RAF Mildenhall, said evolution is just a theory.

Klaes, however, said, "They're missing the vocabulary of science."

Evolution is a scientific theory, which is more than just a guess, he said. Scientific theory refers to a collection of data that explain a phenomenon of nature.

For his part, Kerr sees little difference and said, "It's almost as if [evolution] is a religion."

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensen@mail.estrp.osd.mil



PHOTO BY RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Greg Klaes, a science teacher at Lakenheath Middle School at RAF Feltwell, England, believes the teaching of evolution and creationism cannot co-exist in the same classroom. Some schools in America have introduced creationism or intelligent design in its curriculum.

Airman sentenced

SPANGDAHLEH, Germany — An airman received a one-month prison sentence and a bad conduct discharge last week for using the drug Ecstasy.

Airman 1st Class Sabrina N. Faz, of the 52nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Spangdahle Air Base, Germany, was also demoted to the lowest enlisted grade, according to an Air Force news release.

Faz pleaded guilty to using the controlled substance at a court-martial hearing, the release said. No further information was available.

6 Europe stores honored

Six commissaries in the U.S. European Command earned honorable mention in an annual worldwide merchandise contest conducted by the Defense Commissary Agency, according to a DECA news release.

The contest, conducted over a five-week period last spring, divided stores into three categories: super, large and small. The commissaries were judged for their efforts in creating original, creative and successful sales displays.

In the superstore category, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and Aviano Air Base, Italy, received honorable mentions. The category winners were: McChord Air Force Base, Wash., and Yongsan, South Korea.

Also cited for honorable mention were Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, in the large store category. Heading that list was Barksdale Air Force Base, La., and Osan Air Base, South Korea.

Three small stores received similar accolades. They were: Hohenfels, Germany; Izmir, Turkey; and Livorno, Italy. Winners were Marine Corps Air Station River View, N.C., and Cairo, Egypt.

Students and leadership

Seventy-five high school students will represent the Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe this week in an experimental learning program that focuses on developing leadership skills.

DODDS students from 25 schools in Europe and the Middle East will take part, coming from as far away as Iceland and Bahrain. The students will live, work and learn with a similar number of teens from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic.

Known as the International Student Leadership Institute, the annual program seeks to foster leadership skills, such as negotiation, advocacy and coalition building. The skills are "taught" by students elected last year to the board of regents. Three DODDS seniors are on this year's board.

The event is taking place in Germany, but DODDS asked the exact location not be disclosed for force protection reasons.

VMI cadets punished

LEXINGTON, Va. — Twelve cadets at the Virginia Military Institute have been punished for dressing up as Nazis and queen queens and wearing other costumes deemed inappropriate at a Halloween party in the barracks.

The punishments included confinement to quarters and the writing of essays on the incident.

Photographs of the costumed cadets were posted on the Internet.

The pictures showed three men dressed as saluting Nazis; two men in underpants, tiaras and eye shadow, with tank tops that read, "I heart" a man in uniform; a man in a kilt and a make-up; and a man with a bull's-eye on the seat of his pants.

The college announced the penalties Thursday.

From staff and wire reports

Air Force scrapping Cold War-era radar

BY VYAN LENZ
The Associated Press

MOSCOW, Maine — It's a dinosaur of the Cold War: a three-mile-long radar system spread across hundreds of rural acres and designed to detect Soviet bombers screaming across the Atlantic.

When operational, it could monitor a massive swath of ocean and warn of a threat 1,700 miles away — leaving plenty of time to scramble U.S. military jets in response.

But like warhead silos and other relics of the post-World War II arms race, the military is scrapping the wire-and-steel monolith and offloading the expense of land to private industry.

"The world changed," said David Hinds, manager of the OTH-B radar program at Air Combat Command, which oversees U.S. fighter and bomber wings. "This will not be used for what it was intended. Ever."

The backscatter radar in Maine, and a similar system reaching out into the Pacific from Oregon, could bounce a beam off the ionosphere, which sent a scattered detection signal back to the Earth's surface.

Cold War relics

Cold War blip: Radar developed to detect Soviet bombers were operational only a short time before being scrapped for more advanced technology.

Scrap pile: Now, the defense department is taking down the monoliths — one in Maine, the other in Oregon — so the land can be sold.

Modern dinosaur: Some military experts say the radars should stay because nuclear proliferation remains a threat.

— The Associated Press

The systems were so sensitive, they could note changes in ocean currents.

The radar in Maine, nestled in the woods in a place that bears little resemblance to the Russian capital for which the nearby town was named, cost \$1.5 billion to develop. It was operational for a mere year in the early 1990s, before being mothballed in favor of more advanced Navy technology.

The Air Force maintained the ability to re-start the radars until late last year, when dismantling of both got under way.

David Winkler, a historian with the Naval Service Museum, studied the radars for a report to the Defense Department in the late 1990s on the legacy of the Cold War.

"They are out there to deter anybody who has a bad day and decides to launch against us," Winkler said. "But who are we

detering now, al-Qaida?" While many Cold War military installations have closed in the last decade, not everyone shares the assessment that the radar systems are useless.

John Pike, a military expert with globalsecurity.org, said he's puzzled by the de-



This section of the over-the-horizon radar in Moscow, Maine, is part of a system the Air Force has begun to disassemble. The system, which has been dormant for more than a decade, was operational for only a year in the early 1990s.

cision to dismantle the backscatter radar at a time when nuclear proliferation remains a concern and countries such as Iran and North Korea are developing long-range nuclear warheads.

Military officials counter that they're not abandoning defense, just old technology. New radar systems, including a relocatable version of the backscatter radar, have replaced the massive structure.

USS America to get explosive farewell

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Navy plans to send the retired carrier USS America to the bottom of the Atlantic in explosive tests this spring, an end that is difficult to swallow for some who served on board.

The Navy says the effort, which will cost \$22 million, will provide valuable data for the next generation of aircraft carriers, which are now in development. No warship this size or larger has ever been sunk, so there is a dearth of hard information on how well a supercarrier can survive battle damage, said Pat Dolan, a spokeswoman for Naval Sea Systems Command.

The Navy's plan raises mixed emotions in Ed Pelletier, who served on the America as a helicopter crewman when the ship crashed the Mediterranean shortly after its commissioning in 1965.

He said he was "unhappy that a ship with that name is going to meet that fate, but happy he'll be going down still serving the country." Pelletier, of Portsmouth, N.H., is a trustee of an association of veterans who served on the America.

Since its decommissioning in 1996, the America has been moored to dozens of other inactive warships at a Navy yard in Philadelphia. The Navy's plan is to tow it to sea on April 11 — possibly stopping at Norfolk, Va. — before heading to the deep ocean, 300 miles off the Atlantic coast, for the tests, Dolan said.

There, in experiments that will last from four to six weeks, the Navy will batter the America with explosives, both underwater and above the surface, watching from afar and through monitoring devices placed on the vessel.

These explosions would presumably sim-



Next month, the Navy plans to send the retired supercarrier USS America to the bottom of the Atlantic after battering it with explosives. The America will become the largest warship ever sunk, a fact that's tough to swallow for veterans who served on board since its commissioning in 1965.

ulate attacks by torpedoes, cruise missiles and perhaps a small boat suicide attack like the one that damaged the destroyer USS Cole in Yemen in 2000.

At the end, explosive scuttling charges placed to flood the ship will be detonated, and the America will begin its descent to the sea floor, more than 6,000 feet below.

The Navy has already removed some materials from the ship that could cause environmental damage after it sinks, Dolan said.

Certain aspects of the tests are classified, and neither America's former crew nor the news media will be allowed to view them in person, Dolan said. The Navy does not want

to give away too much information on how a carrier could be sunk, she said.

Why the America? No other retired supercarriers were available on the East Coast when the test was planned, Dolan said. The others — the Forrestal and the Saratoga — were designated as potential museums, she said.

The America was the third carrier of the non-nuclear Kitty Hawk class, and the first to be retired, a victim of post-Cold War budget cuts after 31 years at sea. It launched warplanes during the Vietnam War, the 1986 conflict with Libya, the first Gulf War, and over Bosnia-Herzegovina in the mid-1990s.

Hostage home after incident with U.S. troops

Military launches 'aggressive' investigation into shooting of Italian released in Iraq

By PATRICK QUINN
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The U.S. military said it launched an "aggressive" investigation into the shooting at an American checkpoint that killed an Italian intelligence agent who died in the arms of an Italian journalist that had just been freed after a month as a hostage of Iraqi insurgents.

Giuliana Sgreña, 56, injured in the shooting near Baghdad airport, flew home to freedom Saturday, looking haggard and worn, after spending the night in a U.S. military hospital. She expressed sadness for the intelligence agent killed trying to shield her from the bullets.

President Bush expressed regret and promised to investigate the shooting. The military said U.S. soldiers, not knowing the car was carrying Sgreña, fired after it failed to slow down.

But Bush's phone call late Friday to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi did little to assuage anger in Italy, which has been holding its breath over Sgreña's fate for weeks. The shooting was likely to set off fresh protests against

Berlusconi for keeping 3,000 troops in Iraq despite strong opposition.

"Another victim of an absurd war," said Alfonso Pecorella Scano, leader of the Green Party. A communist senator called for a protest Saturday in front of the U.S. Consulate in Milan.

Sgreña left Iraq after she was discharged from an American military hospital in Baghdad where she had been treated for shrapnel in the shoulder. Berlusconi was among those who greeted her in Rome, where she had to be helped off a small, private jet.

She was placed in an ambulance and was expected to undergo surgery on her collarbone.

Sgreña told colleagues at the leftist newspaper *Il Manifesto* that her captors never treated her badly, the Italian news agency ANSA reported.

Her brother, Ivan Sgreña, told reporters she was very happy to be back in Italy, but was "very sorry and sad" about the death of intelligence officer Nicola Calipari, who had negotiated her release.

"She's been tested, but she's alive. Finally, we've gotten to see her," said the journalist's father, Franco Sgreña.

Her arrival in Rome came as the Iraqi Shiite spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani called for bickering politicians in the clergy-backed United Iraqi Alliance to set aside differences and form a government more than a month after landmark elections.

Leaders of the alliance met in central Baghdad to discuss a way out of Iraq's growing political impasse.

Alliance members meeting in central Baghdad agreed to try form a government and convene the 275-member National Assembly by March 15. Iraqis voted for the assembly on Jan. 30 and the alliance has already missed two previous target dates — March 1 and 6.

Ibrahim Mohamed Ali Bahar al-Olam, an alliance deputy, said they agreed the National Assembly would convene "no later than March 15."

Another deputy, Fatah al-Sheik said pressure would be put on interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi "and the Kurds" so that a cabinet would be ready by that date.

Allawi's party finished third with 40 seats in the assembly, compared to the alliance's 140 and the Kurdish coalition's 75. He has been trying to build his own coalition in an effort to keep his job.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Friday, March 4, 2005, at least 1,507 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,142 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department.

The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is twelve higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Friday.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,369 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 1,033 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

- One soldier was killed Friday in a vehicle accident near Tikrit, Iraq.
- Four soldiers were killed Friday in Anbar province, Iraq.

The latest identifications reported by the military or family:

- Army Spc. Seth Garceau, 22, Oelwein, Iowa; died Friday from injuries received

in an explosion Sunday while traveling between Karbala and Ramadi; assigned to the National Guard's 224th Engineer Battalion, Burlington, Iowa.

■ Army Spc. Azhar Ali, 27, and Army Spc. Wai P. Lwin, 27, of New York; killed Wednesday in Baghdad when an explosive detonated near their vehicle; assigned to the National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, New York.

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Bahnhof	8-14 Apr
Bahnhof	22-28 Apr
Camp Doha	8-14 Apr
Darmstadt	15-21 Apr
Des Moines	1-7 Apr
Friedberg	23 Apr-5 May
Giebelstadt	15-21 Apr
Grafenwoehr	25-31 Mar
Hansau	18-24 Mar
Heidelberg	25-31 Mar
Hohenfels	1-7 Apr
Ilseheim	15-21 Apr
Katterbach	8-14 Apr
Kitzingen	8-14 Apr
Kosovo	23 Apr-5 May
Lakenheath	25-31 Mar
Livorno	6-12 May
Mannheim	18-24 Mar
Mildenhall	18-24 Mar
Ramstein Herford	1-7 Apr
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Spangdahlem	15-21 Apr
Tafelberg	13-19 May
Vallungen	1-7 Apr
Vicenza	23 Apr-5 May
Vincennes	18-24 Mar
Vogelweh	18-24 Mar
Wiesbaden	25-31 Mar
Wuerzburg	18-24 Mar

AAFES THEATERS

Former soldiers back in uniform for Iraq

Individual Ready Reserve members talk about being back in the military

BY CHARLIE COON

Stars and Stripes

TKKIRIT, Iraq — You're in the Army now.

Make that "again."

"The old uniform fit a little tight," Sgt. Brian Walker said. "Likely, they issued me four new sets."

Walker is one of 5,600 people, many of whom hadn't worn a military uniform in years, taken from civilian life and activated under the Individual Ready Reserve program.

Last summer, the Pentagon announced it was calling up the civilians because there were not enough reservists, guardsmen or active-duty troops to fill certain duty slots, mostly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Walker, an immigration officer from Swanton, Vt., left the Army in 1998 but signed up for the IRR program in exchange for a \$5,900 per year. Now it's payback time.

"It's kind of ironic," said Walker. "Me and my wife waited 10 years to have children in case of a deployment." They now have a 5-year-old daughter.

In justifying the call-up, Gen. Richard A. Cody, the Army's vice chief of staff, told Congress last summer it was the "worst-case" deployment plans after the rise in violence in Iraq.

David Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, was quoted by Stars and Stripes last year as saying the IRR "is part of the obligation that each entrant in the military assumes. The fact that it is rare that we call up the Individual Ready Reservist does not, of course, mean that it is inappropriate."

Some IRR members were activated for the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War, Chu said. Walker, a member of the 376th Personnel Services Battalion, said he chose to join the ready reserves for the money after he left active duty.

Others, such as Spc. Steven Sena, of Albuquerque, N.M., were called up as part of an eight-year obligation he incurred for enlisting in the military. Sena served for two years, which automatically made him eligible for activation over the next six years.

"I'm still not happy I got called back, especially when they don't need us," said Sena of the 326th Postal Platoon. "They could have called up other people in our place who wanted to go."

Shonda Humphrey, who left the Army in May 2001, was also called back for a tour in Iraq.

Humphrey, a single mother with children ages 6, 4, and 3, became Spc. Humphrey, assigned to the 326th, after receiving her alert notice last August. She has chosen to look at the bright side of her one-year call to duty.

"Since I'm here I might as well learn postal operations, since

they reclassified me as postal," said Humphrey, a payroll administrator from Montgomery, Ala., whose obligation to the Army would have expired in May. "Maybe I'll go home and get a good postal job."

Humphrey's three children are being cared for by her fiancé, who is not the children's father, and her sister.

"I try not to talk to [the children] every day because they get sad," Humphrey said. "But as far

love from the folks on campus.

"As liberal as they are, and as much as they hate the war, they're still supportive of me; they send their letters and e-mails," said Turner, a mother of five daughters (two of whom are married) and granddaughter of two. Her husband, Louis, now has to hold down the household fort.

As postal specialists in Iraq, the soldiers have several duties. They break down pallets of incoming mail for troops in Iraq and push it

to outlying bases, help customers at base post offices, and prepare outgoing mail for the States.

Sena, an estimator for a paint contracting company, suffers from the same heartache as the deployed reservists, guardsmen and active-duty troops in Iraq who are used to wearing a uniform on a regular basis.

His son, Isaiah, recently turned 1. Isaiah was just 5 months old when his father left for the seven-month retraining program that ready reservists must undergo, making his actual time away from home 19 months.

"It's just difficult because you wonder if he's going to know you're his dad when you return," Sena said.

E-mail Charlie Coon at: coon@mail.strips.osp.mil

"Since I'm here I might as well learn postal operations, since they reclassified me as postal. Maybe I'll go home and get a good postal job."

Shonda Humphrey

376th Personnel Services Battalion

as my fiancé and sister, I talk to them just about every day."

Master Sgt. Lisa Turner, the 326th's platoon sergeant, was also thrown when she got her call-up letter in July.

"At first it was a shock to receive my orders," Turner said. "Then Sena and I went through training at Camp McGrady [S.C.]. For me, it was pretty motivating." Turner said she was getting an increase in her pension because of the call-up.

Turner, an administrative assistant at the University of Maine at Farmington, says she gets lots of



CHARLIE COON/Stars and Stripes

From left, Sps. Antoinette Jackson, Sps. Shonda Humphrey and Sps. Steven Sena and Master Sgt. Lisa Turner, Army reservists with the 326th Postal Platoon, wait for a helicopter transport at Forward Operating Base Specifier in Tikrit, Iraq. Turner, Humphrey and Sena were activated for duty under the Individual Ready Reserve program, under which former active-duty soldiers can be called back for service.

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Documents: Gs recorded prison abuse in Iraq

Investigation finds footage to be 'inappropriate,' but not criminal

BY RICHARD A. SERRANO
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — In a twist on the offensive photography that inflamed the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal, a separate group of U.S. soldiers in Iraq shot video of themselves beating prisoners and using the body of a dead Iraqi to "wave hello," according to documents released Friday.

The digital video disc, which soldiers derisively titled "Ramada Madness," a reference to a turbulent city in Iraq's Sunni Triangle, prompted an internal Army investigation of the Florida National Guard troops from West Palm Beach who were involved. The video was brought to the attention of Army supervisors by a civilian public affairs employee in Florida who expressed disgust after viewing the scenes of soldiers reveling among beaten and dead Iraqi combatants.

The internal investigation determined that the footage "contained inappropriate rather than criminal behavior," according to military records. Investigators later determined that the DVD was destroyed by an officer who learned of the internal investigation. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, no criminal charges were ever filed.

The investigation was among thousands of new pages of military documents the ACLU obtained in a lawsuit seeking information on detention practices. The Army turned over the information to the ACLU, also releasing the documents Friday to reporters at the Pentagon. The ACLU issued descriptions of the documents.

The ACLU said the descriptions of the video and other new Army documents raise fresh concerns about whether the military was seriously concerned with prisoner abuse, nearly a year after the first revelations that prison guards and interrogators mistreated detainees at the U.S.-run Abu Ghraib compound near Baghdad.

"Pieces of the puzzle are still missing," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero,

noting that none of the Pentagon's top civilian officials have been implicated or punished. "An outside special counsel is the only way to ensure that all civilians who violated, or conspired to violate, the laws are held responsible for their crimes."

The Pentagon has resisted an outside review but said Friday that it would deal with deficiencies in its prison facilities.

"The Army remains committed to addressing identified problems in detainee operations," Army officials said in a prepared statement.

According to the files, the DVD was a recording of Florida National Guard activities in Iraq between 2003 and 2004. The soldiers were identified as being from B Company, 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment.

The scenes included shots of soldiers kicking a prisoner wearing plastic handcuffs who was on the ground and moaning after apparently being shot in the abdomen. He had been shot after allegedly wielding a gun against American soldiers during a raid, the Army documents said.

According to the ACLU, the prisoner later died. In another videotaped scene, a soldier appeared to be hitting a bound prisoner in the head with a rifle butt as interrogators were attempting to question him. The prisoner was apparently detained for throwing rocks at a U.S. military convoy, according to the descriptions.

One soldier told interrogators that the rifle-butting was actually only a staged event and that the prisoner was never struck in a truck at a U.S. checkpoint. The soldier told investigators he was only repositioning the body because there was concern over a possible missile inside the truck.

Another scene reportedly showed soldiers yelling profanities at Iraqi civilians as the soldiers were on what was described as a joy ride in a van narrowly used for carrying prisoners.

Soldier's defense opposing use of diary in murder trial

BY ESTES THOMPSON
The Associated Press

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — Lawyers for Sgt. Hasan Akbar, charged in a fatal grenade attack on two officers in Kuwait, urged a military judge Friday to keep diary entries written six years before he enlisted in the Army out of his murder trial.

The request came during a motions hearing in the case, as prosecutors argued the 27 diary entries show "intent, plan, motive" for the March 2003 attack at Camp Pennsylvania, days after the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The military judge overseeing the case, Col. Stephen Henley, expressed skepticism.

"Statements from 1992?" he asked prosecutor Capt. John Benson.

"I think it's highly relevant to how this case is shaping up," Benson replied.

Akbar, 33, is accused of stealing grenades from a Humvee and using them and a firearm in an attack on fellow members of the 101st Airborne Division. Army Capt. Christopher Seifert, 27, and Air Force Maj. Gregory Stone, 40, were killed; 14 other soldiers were injured.

If convicted of two counts of premeditated murder and three

counts of attempted premeditated murder, Akbar could get the death penalty.

Maj. David Coombs, a defense lawyer, said his client's diary entries have no relationship to the military or the attack.

Although the entries were not read in court, Coombs argued it was clear in the 1992 entry that what Akbar was "talking about is not getting any respect."



Akbar

Another entry refers to frustration over Akbar's inability to get a date with a certain woman, he said, a third apparently was written after his arrest.

brother joined the military.

Coombs said the prosecution was taking statements out of context to make it appear Akbar planned the attack for years before he joined the Army.

Henley said he would rule later on a defense motion to block the statements.

Although Akbar has been diagnosed with sleep apnea and has

nodded off during past court sessions, he did not appear to have trouble staying awake during Friday's two-hour hearing.

Akbar told the judge that his Denver-based civilian lawyer, Wafar Al-Muhammad Al-Haq, planned to withdraw from the case because he has not been paid. Akbar told the judge his mother might be able to help with payments, although he added that he does not mind being represented by his military lawyers.

And defense lawyer Maj. Dan Brookhark urged Henley to bar prosecutors from showing jurors gruesome autopsy photos, saying that would prejudice the panel against Akbar.

Akbar has confessed several times to the attack and his lawyers plan to use an insanity or diminished capacity defense in his trial, so the defense does not intend to contest how Seifert and Stone died, Brookhark said.

He objected to showing jurors a photo of organs removed from a victim and another showing a victim laid in a body bag with bloody boots and medical equipment taped to his face.

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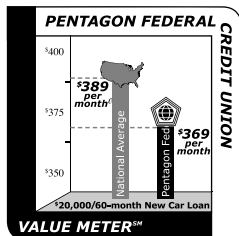
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IN THE WORLD

Syria expected to pull Lebanon troops back

By BASSEM MROUE

The Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Thousands of Syrians supporting their leader and denouncing the United States and Israel packed a square outside parliament Saturday to hear President Bashar Assad's expected announcement to pull back his troops in Lebanon closer to the Syrian border.

Assad's announcement, expected to be made during a rare speech to the 250-member chamber, is seen as a bid to ease incessant Arab and U.S.-led international pressure regarding the presence of 15,000 Syrian troops in Lebanon and the risk of isolation.

But even before Assad outlined his position, President Bush rejected anything but a full withdrawal as unacceptable.

The crowd of about 3,000 gathered outside the parliament to cheer the president as he arrived.

The protesters chanted, "One, one, one, Syria and Lebanon are one" and "Bush, Bush, listen, the Syrian people will not bow."

In the Lebanese capital of Beirut, several hundred Lebanese flag-waving protesters gathered at the central Martyrs' Square, keeping up the daily anti-Syrian campaign that has drawn tens of

thousands since the Feb. 14 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Many Lebanese blame Syria and the Lebanese government in the killing, but both deny involvement.

About 2.5 miles away, more than 50 Lebanese troops deployed near the Syrian intelligence headquarters in Beirut in what officers said was a precau-

tionary action to provide security and prevent any acts of intimidation against the Syrians.

The night before, a concussion bomb was tossed from a moving car at a Syrian military post in Baalbek, eastern Lebanon, exploding but causing no casualties, security officials said.

Assad's unscheduled address comes after a rough week, begin-

ning with the resignation of his allied government in Lebanon and ending with the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah telling him face-to-face to get all his forces out of Lebanon quickly.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Walid Mouallem believes Assad will announce a pullback of his country's troops in his speech, his first to the parliament in two years.

In Moscow, Mouallem told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that Syrian and Lebanese leaders have agreed on an action plan for carrying out the 1989-Arab brokered Taif Accord. But he would not say when.

The accord calls for Syria to move its troops in Lebanon to the border, then for both countries to negotiate their withdrawal.

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Lawmaker: Syria nuke comment was a joke

The Associated Press

DALLAS — A Dallas-area congressman raised eyebrows with his recent offer to personally drop a couple of nuclear bombs on Syria.

But Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Texas, told The Dallas Morning News for a story in Friday's editions that he was "kind of joking" in his comments at a pancake breakfast at a North Texas church.

The Feb. 19 remarks at the Suncrest United Methodist Church in Allen were first reported this week in Roll Call. The Capitol Hill newspaper reported it had heard a recording of the talk made by an unidentified person in attendance.

According to Roll Call, Johnson said he told the president: "Syria is the problem. Syria is where those weapons of mass destruction are, in my view. You know, I can fly an F-15, put two nukes on 'em and I'll make one pass. We won't have to worry about Syria anymore."

Johnson, 74, is a former Air Force pilot who served in the wars in Korea and Vietnam, where he was shot down and spent 7½ years as a prisoner of war.

He told The Dallas Morning News that he was surprised that anyone took his comments seriously and has never advocated a nuclear strike at Syria.

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Hospitalized pope to give silent blessing

The Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II met with a top cardinal and sent messages to students and Italy's premier Saturday, reinforcing the Vatican's portrayal of a pope who is alert and attending to church business even as he recovers from his latest health crisis.

The Vatican said the frail, 84-year-old pontiff again would give a silent blessing on Sunday from a window of Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic hospital, where he is getting breathing and speech therapy after throat surgery to ease his second respiratory crisis in a month.

"John Paul II will join the Angelus prayer from his hospital room, and at the end he will bless the faithful present at Gemelli Polyclinic the same way as last Sunday," papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said in a statement.

John Paul made a surprise window appearance at the hospital a week ago, waving and giving the sign of the cross to cheering pilgrims gathered beneath his 10th-floor suite.

Navarro-Valls said Archbishop Leonardo Sandri — an Argentine from the Holy See's secretary of state office who has become the pope's official voice for the public

— would read out the traditional weekly prayer known as the Angelus and deliver a blessing to believers gathered at St. Peter's Square.

When he is well, the pope addresses the faithful from a window overlooking the square.



Pope John Paul II

Although the pope can barely speak, and the Vatican has not said when he'll be able to leave the hospital, a new image of the papacy has been emerging since his latest health crisis emphasizing the power of his presence over that of the spoken word.

On Saturday, the Holy See reinforced the idea of the pope staying abreast of world affairs despite his illness. It said he sent messages of condolence to Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi and the family of Nicola Calipari, an intelligence agent killed by U.S. fire in Iraq while escorting freed Italian hostage Giuliana Sgrena to safety.

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the pope's vicar for Rome and the in-

fluent president of the Italian Bishops Conference, told reporters outside the hospital that he saw the pope Saturday and "found him well, serene."

"I can say to all that the news, as always, is positive," Ruini said. He said his visit with John Paul preceded a meeting next week of

a bishops council — yet another suggestion from the Vatican that the pope was still involved in pressing church business.

The Vatican has said it is possible the pope could be released in time for Easter on March 27, but that his level of participation in a flurry of Holy Week services that

begins on March 20 with Palm Sunday would still have to be worked out.

The pope's overall health and recovery are complicated by Parkinson's disease, which causes gradual loss of muscle control.

He also suffers from crippling hip and knee ailments.

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France struggles with 'the horror of horror'

Nation, town try to cope with massive pedophilia scandal

The Associated Press

ANGERS, France — The colorful playgrounds and prim plantings of this working class housing complex seem to have hidden a grim secret for years. Inside, prosecutors say, parents allegedly raped, abused and pimped their children — some not yet old enough to walk.

Well-maintained, modern and inviting, the three-story apartment buildings of the Saint-Leonard neighborhood in the western town of Angers were designed to make life in low-income housing civilized.

But some of the residents who moved in after it opened in 1998 are accused of terrible acts.

Sixty-six people have gone on trial this week for crimes of pedophilia that have stunned France. The case, coming on the heels of another high-profile pedophilia trial in northern France last year, has prompted renewed soul-searching about how people could sink so low in a country that prides itself as an economic and political leader of Europe.

Investigators say 45 children — ages from 6 months to 14 years — were abused by their parents or people close to them from 1999 to 2002, in some cases in exchange for small amounts of money, food,

cigarettes or alcohol. A grandfather of some of the children allegedly filmed rapes and other abuse.

The trial's second day Friday was devoted to presenting the more than 200 witnesses to the court.

In Angers, known for its medieval castle and Cointreau liquor, some residents refused to accept that such crimes could be perpetrated in their midst, Angers' Deputy Mayor Michelle Moreau said.

"I've heard people say to me, 'But you know, these children were used to it,'" she said. "It's the horror of horror."

The trial is expected to last four months. But getting over the horror could take longer.

French newspapers in recent days have been full of questions by child psychologists and columnists asking how something so ghastly and so enormous could have gone undetected so long.

Part of the explanation was the tight-knit nature of the ring — husbands forced wives and parents forced children, lawyers said.

"We're talking about family networks. There is a code of silence, a family law takes over," said Jacques Montier, a lawyer who represents 11 child victims. "And

the children do not talk."

Defense attorney Monique Vi-mont described her client, one of the principal defendants, as "a woman worn out by life," who was beaten by her husband and pressured to commit crimes against children.

Under French law, the defendants cannot be named, to protect the identities of their alleged child victims.

The case came to light in 2000, when a 16-year-old girl alleged she had been raped by her mother's boyfriend and his brother.

Alcoholism, poverty and defense lawyers claim, a failure of social workers to spot signs of abuse may have played a role.

More than half of the accused, ages 27 to 73, were unemployed, living off benefits in state-support-



An unidentified suspect hides upon arrival at the courthouse in Angers, western France, on Friday. It was the second day of the trial of 66 people accused of involvement in the rape, sexual abuse and prostitution of dozens of children and babies.

ed housing. Some of the accused were abused themselves as children, defense attorneys say.

"The person I'm defending sits in the box next to his father, who

is the perpetrator of sexual acts on him only years ago — and now is his accomplice," said Pascal Rouiller, an attorney who represents five defendants.

Ancient ancestor thought to be nearly 4 million years old

By ANTHONY MITCHELL

The Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — A team of U.S. and Ethiopian scientists has discovered the fossilized remains of what they believe is humankind's first walking ancestor, a hominid that lived in the wooded grasslands of the Horn of Africa nearly 4 million years ago.

The bones were discovered in February at a new site called Mille, in the northeastern Afar region of Ethiopia, said Bruce Latimer, director of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in the U.S. state of Ohio. They are estimated to be 3.8-4 million years old.

The fossils include a complete tibia from the lower part of the leg, parts of a thighbone, ribs, vertebrae, a collarbone, pelvis and a complete shoulder blade, or scapula. There is also an anklebone which, with the tibia, proves the creature walked upright, said Latimer, co-leader of the team that discovered the fossils.

The bones are the latest in a growing collection of early human fragments that help explain the evolutionary history of man.

"Right now we can say this is the world's oldest bipedal (an animal walking on two feet) and what makes this significant is be-

cause what makes us human is walking upright," Latimer said.

"This new discovery will give us a picture of how walking upright occurred."

The findings have not been reviewed by outside scientists or published in a scientific journal. Leslie Aiello, an anthropologist and head of the Graduate School at University College in London said, however, that the new finds could be significant.

"It sounds like a significant find, ... particularly if they have a partial skeleton because it allows you to speculate on biomechanics," said Aiello, who was not part of the discovery team.

Paleontologists previously discovered in Ethiopia the remains of *Ardipithecus ramidus*, a transitional creature with significant ape characteristics dating back as many as 4.5 million years. There is some dispute over whether it walked upright on two legs, Latimer and Aiello said.

"This discovery will tell us much about how our 4-million-year-old ancestors walked, how tall they were and what they looked like," said Yohannes Haile-Selassie, an Ethiopian scientist and curator at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History as well as co-leader of the discovery team.



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IN THE STATES

Bush takes Social Security plan on the road

BY DEB RIECHMANN
The Associated Press

WESTFIELD, N.J. — President Bush kept pitching his Social Security overhaul Friday, undaunted by Democratic opposition, frayed Republican support and less than enthusiastic backing from the public.

"I'm going to keep telling people we've got a problem until it sinks in, because we've got one," Bush said, underscoring estimates that say Social Security will begin paying out more than it collects in taxes as early as 2018.

Bush's visits to New Jersey and South Bend, Ind., began a two-month blitz in which he and other administration officials are visiting 29 states. The road trip ended a week in which the administration lost momentum on the president's call to revamp the government's 70-year-old retirement system.

The stops Friday were specifically targeted for Reps. Mike Ferguson of New Jersey and Chris

President's speech cites progress for democracy

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush hailed recent moves toward democracy across the Middle East on Saturday while pressing his demand that Syria withdraw from Lebanon and prodding Palestinians to dismantle terrorist organizations.

"The world is now speaking with one voice to ensure that democracy and freedom are given a chance to flourish in Lebanon," Bush said in his weekly radio address.

He used the address to survey the changing landscape in recent months across a region in which he says "freedom is on the march."

Bush cited successful elections in Afghanistan, the Palestinian territories and Iraq. He also cited peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations in Beirut, the Lebanon capital, "and steps toward democratic reform in Egypt and Saudi Arabia."

Chocola of Indiana, two Republican congressmen who are taking heat on the issue.

Ferguson, who has not taken a position on the private accounts Bush wants, introduced the president, saying only that Bush has

launched an "important national conversation." Chocola has said that recent town meetings in his district left him willing to follow Bush's lead, although he talked of the political problems surrounding the issue.



President Bush shares a laugh with Betty Batteredbe, of Edwardsburg, Mich., as he talks about his plan to reform Social Security at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., on Friday.

To counter Bush's nationwide swing, Democratic senators planned their own "fix it, don't nix it" forums in four cities over two days.

The Democratic National Committee was responding with radio advertisements in each market targeting Chocola and Ferguson, who have faced tough races in the past. The ads accuse Bush of wanting to "end Social Security's guaranteed benefits" and tie them to the "ups and downs of the stock market."

"Call Congressman Chocola and tell him to oppose President Bush's risky scheme," one ad says.

Bush rebuffed that criticism in his appearance at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend. People in the friendly audience had received tickets through Chocola's office, and the administration chose those allowed to ask questions — none of them seeking details of his proposal.

People opposed to the plan demonstrated outside of both appearances. In Westfield, police said they arrested nine people, including five juveniles, on disorderly

conduct charges. One protester carried a sign that read, "If you want to gamble, Mr. President, go to Atlantic City."

Outside the Joyce Center on the Notre Dame campus, about 200 people demonstrated across the street with signs that read "You're plan's a joke, we'll all be broke" and "Social Security is a phony crisis."

Although he stressed that younger workers need to embrace the private accounts, Bush told the Indiana audience: "If you're relying upon Social Security today, nothing will change. I don't care what the ads say, what the politicians say, you're going to get your check."

Bush envisions no change for retirees or workers age 55 and older. Under his plan, however, younger Americans could divert up to 4 percent of their income subject to Social Security taxes into personal accounts in exchange for a reduction in their guaranteed benefit.

Despite Bush's uphill battle on the issue, the White House says it's not changing its message.

Bush pardons bootlegger

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush pardoned eight people, including a man convicted of bootlegging 45 years ago, the Justice Department announced Friday.

The first round of clemency orders in Bush's second term brings his total since taking office to 39 pardons and sentence commutations.

Bush's father, President George H.W. Bush, issued 77 pardons during his single term from 1989 to 1993, according to statistics collected by the University of Pittsburgh law school.

President Clinton, by contrast, granted clemency to 456 people during his eight years in office, including 176 on his last day at

the White House. One of those was the contentious pardon of fugitive financier Marc Rich, former husband of Democratic Party donor Denise Rich.

Most presidents since the beginning of the 20th century have granted hundreds if not thousands of pardons and sentence commutations, led by Franklin D. Roosevelt's 3,687 over four terms.

Those pardoned by Bush include Charles Russell Cooper, of Corpus Christi, Texas, who was sentenced in May 1959 in South Carolina to three years probation for bootlegging, and Joseph Daniel Gavin, of East Elmhurst, N.Y., court-martialed by the Army in 1984 for failure to obey an order and other charges and given a bad conduct discharge.

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Beached dolphins die off Fla. coast

The Associated Press

MARATHON, Fla. — Nineteen dolphins that became stranded off the Florida Keys have died, including 13 who were euthanized, officials said Friday.

More than 30 others will be moved to rehabilitation facilities Saturday.

The dolphins were euthanized after blood tests showed 13 of them were "not likely to recover at all and that they are suffering," said Laura Engleby, a biologist with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

"Some were still not swimming on their own, and they couldn't hold themselves up," Denise Jackson of the Marine Mammal Rescue Team said.

More than 60 rough-tooth dolphins beached themselves Wednesday on flats and sandbars about a quarter mile off Marathon.

Rescue teams moved the dol-

phins to a nearby canal where veterinarians have been conducting medical tests.

The remaining 31 live dolphins were being given Pedialyte — a drink normally given to dehydrated human babies — and fresh water, Jackson said.

Teams planned to move them by Saturday morning to rehabilitation facilities along the Keys or on the mainland, officials said.

Marine mammals may become stranded when they are sick, injured or disoriented, Engleby said.

"... [They couldn't hold themselves up.]"

Denise Jackson
Marine Mammal
Rescue Team

Scientists performing necropsies will take genetic samples to determine whether the dolphins all came from the same population.

Rough-tooth dolphins normally inhabit deep waters in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

Marathon, in the middle of the Florida Keys, is about 46 miles east of Key West.



Scientists on Thursday release one of the rough-tooth dolphins that became stranded off the Florida Keys. Nineteen of the dolphins have died, including 13 who were euthanized, officials said Friday.

Gene therapy on hold

WASHINGTON — Following a setback in gene therapy experiments in France, U.S. health advisers are recommending the treatment be given only to children who have no other alternatives.

The Food and Drug Administration convened its advisory panel after a 3-year-old French boy became the third child to develop cancer following gene therapy for treatment of X-linked severe combined immunodeficiency, or X-SCID. The FDA had asked U.S. researchers doing similar work to put it on hold.

Doctors and scientists on the advisory panel said they didn't want to hold up the therapy for children who have already failed to respond to bone marrow transplants, an alternative treatment. But they noted that the number of such children — who under Friday's recommendation would still be able to have experimental gene therapy — is very small.

Ten children suffering with X-SCID were basically cured in the French study, at first greeted with great excitement as a breakthrough in gene therapy, said Dr. Warren Leonard, a panel member from the National Institutes of Health. But three later developed leukemia, and one of them died.

From The Associated Press

Budget office warns Congress of higher Medicare drug costs

BY ALAN FRAM

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress' nonpartisan budget analyst added new fuel to the Medicare debate late Friday with new, higher cost estimates for a prescription drug program that has already drawn fire for its soaring price tag.

In a letter to lawmakers, the Congressional Budget Office said its estimate for the drug benefits for the 10-year period ending in 2015 had grown by \$54 billion since January. No cumulative 10-year total was provided, but a separate CBO lettered figures that indicated a total over that period of \$849 billion.

Significantly, though, that number omitted savings expected to accompany the new program. As a result, the new congressional estimate was not directly comparable to the \$724 billion projection the Bush administration released last month, which factored in those savings.

If those savings were subtracted, the \$849 billion figure would likely be lower than Bush's \$724 billion estimate, according to figures cited by the CBO.

Even so, the new numbers could further roll the politics surrounding the drug benefits, which don't even take effect until 2006. They were released days before Congress' Republican-run budget committees start writing

fiscal plans that will include domestic spending cuts and call for savings from Medicaid and other benefit programs.

"The price tag for the Republican Medicare prescription drug bill just gets higher and higher," said Thomas Kahn, Democratic staff director of the House Budget Committee. "The underlying benefits for seniors never improve."

"The drug benefit is a necessary improvement to Medicare," said White House budget office spokesman Neuner.

Messages left for spokespeople for several congressional Republicans were not immediately returned.

Ever since they were enacted in 2003 for a presumable \$400 billion 10-year price tag, the cost has crept steadily upward.

Lawmakers of both parties have accused the White House of withholding information about the program's true costs to win conservatives' votes that were crucial to congressional passage, a charge the administration denied. Two months after passage, the Bush administration raised the 10-year cost estimate to \$534 billion.

Since then, the projected cost has grown mostly because the original 10 years being measured included two years when the program was barely in effect. The current 10-year period begins in 2006 and covers a full decade of benefits.



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Thundering out of the gate

Talk of reform around the globe is positive start for Rice's term as top diplomat

By GEORGE GEDDA

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Israel and the Palestinians are talking peace. Egypt is thinking about holding competitive elections. The Iraq vote was surprisingly smooth. Syria is talking about leaving Lebanon.

Not a bad six weeks for America's new diplomat-in-chief, Condoleezza Rice. Indeed, she may be off to the fastest start of any secretary of state in memory.

Colin Powell, recently seen on holiday in the Caribbean, perhaps wished he could have stayed on a little longer to bask in the spate of good news.

Powell left the State Department for the last time on Jan. 25, missing by five days the Iraqi election and by two weeks the Israeli-Palestinian truce.

He was never able to make much headway on the Middle East during his watch. He took office not long after the second Palestinian intifada began in the region. He was gone just before it seems to have ended. He never had a meaningful opening to work with in the region.

Not surprisingly, Rice seems to be enjoying life in her State Department perch.

"It is a great job at a great time," she told PBS' "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer." "This is a wonderful time for those of us who care about the spread of freedom and liberty, and it's a great time for the Euro-Atlantic alliance."

That may be an overstatement, but the Iraq war syndrome that plagued the alliance does seem to be fading. Somewhat improbably, the United States and France are joining hands in seeking a Lebanon free of Syrian troops.

Kurt Campbell, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, says Rice has benefited from a combination of skill and good fortune.

He also credits her with putting together a strong team, "one of the strongest teams in decades."

Powell's team was highly competent, he says, but there was always the sense that it was under siege and "maybe a little on the outs" with others in the administration.

Peter Brookes, of the Heritage Foundation, said he doesn't subscribe to the thesis that Powell didn't have much influence.

"The devil's advocate view is also important to the development of policy," he says, predicting that history will be kind to Powell.

"He was an architect of what we are seeing today," he said.

The recent positive trends, Brookes adds, are a vindication of President Bush's policies, of which, he notes, Rice certainly has been a part for some time.

Not so fast with the victory laps, says Michael O'Hanlon, of the Brookings Institution.

He acknowledges that Rice has had a few breaks but asks, "What problems have been solved? It's a little early to take things to the bank."

He believes the Middle East still offers more problems than opportunities for the United States.

Nobody should be gushing, O'Hanlon adds, over the announcement by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that he favors a constitutional change that would permit competitive elections.

"Is Egypt solved because Mubarak has figured out a way to make elections look competitive when they probably won't be?" O'Hanlon asks.

No one doubts, least of all Rice herself, the depth of the challenges that await her on North Korea and Iran, two issues on which there is nothing to cheer about yet.

Analysis



AP

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has witnessed successful Iraqi elections, promises of election reform in Egypt and a reform movement in Lebanon during the first six weeks in her new post.

Montana fire concerns spark Guard request

The Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — Montana is at such risk for a wildfire "blow-up" this summer that Gov. Brian Schweitzer wants at least some of the state's 1,500 National Guard soldiers in Iraq and elsewhere to return for the wildfire season.

The governor warned Friday the state is like a powder keg because of persistent drought, a shortage of mountain snow and forests full of dry timber.

"I know it's going to be a bad fire year," he said, adding he anticipates a repeat of the 1988 season when 412 fires charred 2.2 million acres in the Northern Rockies, including about 793,000 acres in Yellowstone National Park.

"Somebody's going to have a blowup," Schweitzer said in an interview. "Is it northern Idaho, is it eastern Washington or is it Montana?"

The governor has asked the Pentagon to return some of the Montana National Guard troops and aircraft called to active duty.

He also plans to ask leaders in Idaho, Washington, Saskatchewan and Alberta to commit manpower and machines to fight the anticipated wildfires.

Montana Guard spokesman



AP

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer, seen Friday in his Helena, Mont., office, and other officials are worried this fire season may be as bad as 1988, when Yellowstone National Park burned.

Maj. Scott Smith said about 2,000 soldiers, often called on to supplement fire crews each summer, remain in the state.

But 10 of the state's 12 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, each capable of carrying a 600-gallon water bucket or 11 firefighters, are not back from Iraq, he said.

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Macabre trophies

BTK and other serial killers keep tokens of crimes

By MATT SEDENSKY
The Associated Press

WICHITA, Kansas — The Baton Rouge serial killer made off with a silver toe ring, Jeffrey Dahmer kept rotting body parts. And the serial killer known as BTK held on to jewelry, driver's licenses and photographs.

The things that serial killers take from their crime scenes are not meaningless mementos. Those who study the cases say such trophies are important in understanding how BTK may have gone years without satisfying his hunger to murder.

BTK suspect Dennis L. Rader, 59, a churchgoing Boy Scout leader who is married with two children, is charged with 10 slayings between 1974 and 1991.

Rader

Many contend the serial killer — who gave himself the nickname BTK, short for "Bind, Torture, Kill" — is responsible for even more murders.

The timeline of the BTK killings has gaps as long as eight years and a 14-year reprieve between the last linked death and Rader's arrest.

But experts agree that regardless of the time between a serial killer's murders, his fantasies can be satisfied with a glimpse of his trophies.

"They can try to recreate that thrill of dominating and killing somebody," said Marilyn Bardsley, a serial killer expert.

Police haven't said if they've confiscated anything from Rader's house that may have belonged to a BTK victim. Over the years, though, BTK's mailings to authorities and the media have included tokens from his victims' homes.

From Nancy Fox, a 1977 victim, the killer lifted a driver's license. After other crime scenes, he filched jewelry, some of which he later sent to a local television station. When Vicki Weigert was killed in 1986, BTK snapped pictures of her body in various positions.

"The way he was taunting police, he was reliving the killing from a long time ago," said Steven Egger, a criminologist at the University of Houston-Clear Lake who wrote a book on serial murderers, "The Killers Among Us."

Still, Bardsley said the enjoyment trophies can bring is no replacement for actually killing again.

"That thrill wears off," she said.

Case tests Texas law protecting unborn

Teens' respective roles in ending pregnancy incites criticism of legislation

By LISA FALKENBERG
The Associated Press

LUFKIN, Texas — The would-be teen mother arrived by ambulance last May, her belly bruised, the twin fetuses she carried for five months gone and her lips tightly sealed.

Authorities assumed 16-year-old Erica Basoria had been beaten, and charged her boyfriend, 18-year-old Gerardo "Jerry" Flores, with murder under a new Texas state law protecting the unborn.

But Basoria told authorities she had been trying to kill the fetuses for weeks — and finally asked Flores to help by stepping on her stomach.

Now Flores faces murder charges — but Basoria can't be charged because the new law, like many others across the United States, bans prosecution of mothers on the grounds that they have a legal right to end pregnancies.

The case has attorneys on both sides questioning the fairness of the law.

"How can two people conspire to do something like this and only one of them be punished? How can that be fair?" defense attorney Ryan Deaton asked.

Prosecutor Clyde Herrington said it was startling that "they completely leave the female out of the criminal penalty."

The couple had been dating just over a year when Basoria became pregnant in January 2004. Flores, a senior in his last year of high school who was pursuing a soccer scholarship, said he offered to delay college a year until Basoria graduated.

The pregnancy changed everything. Both were scared. Neither had a job. And there were two babies.

Basoria didn't return calls for comment, but wrote in an affidavit that her family encouraged an abortion: "They said I was too young to have children."

Flores' mother, Norma, shunned the idea, saying: "It's a life that wants to live."

At four months, when the mirror betrayed her first bulge, Basoria wanted out.

"About two weeks before the miscarriage, I started hitting myself," Basoria wrote in an affidavit. "I would do this every other day and I would use both of my fists when I did this. I would hit myself 10 or more times."

Then she turned to her boyfriend.

"I said I didn't want to do it," Flores recalled. But she kept pleading, he said.

The night of the miscarriage, the couple fought. Later, he awoke to Basoria's screams and found her crying and bleeding on the toilet. Flores' mother and sister went to the hospital and Flores stayed behind.

Flores since has been charged with capital murder, though prosecutors aren't seeking the death penalty. He remains in jail, awaiting a trial date.

Activists seek justice in 58-year-old Ga. lynching

By ELIOTT C. McLAUGHLIN
The Associated Press

MONROE, Ga. — Where the old Moore's Ford bridge once stood, there are no reminders of the atrocities exacted here 58 years ago — other than a crude, black "KKK" spray-painted on the underside of a modern bridge nearby.

It was at this point along the Apalachee River that a mob of white men pulled four black sharecroppers from a car, dragged them down a wagon trail and repeatedly shot them with pistols and shotguns.

Nearly six decades later, the lynchings remain unsolved and most of the 55 suspects named in the FBI's investigation are dead, but that isn't deterring the efforts of the dozens of politicians, activists and victims' relatives that make up the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee.

They want justice — regardless of how much time has passed.

Bolstered by the recent wave of reopened civil rights murder cases across the South, the small activist group is asking a local prosecutor to use the FBI report to seek indictments against the surviving suspects.

The group also is organizing local events next month to call attention to the unsolved lynchings of Roger and Dorothy Malcom and George and Mae Murray Dorsey. The events will include a forum at the Walton County Courthouse and a 2½-mile march to the new bridge.

District Attorney Ken Wynne says he won't reopen the case until new evidence is found.

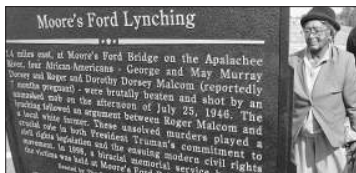
"They've successfully prosecuted old, old homicide cases when new evidence develops," Wynne said, but he pointed out that four years ago the Georgia Bureau of Investigation "conducted a fresh investigation and wasn't able to unearth any evidence to bring charges."

In 2001, then-Gov. Roy Barnes ordered the case reopened. The FBI says it considers the case open, but unsolved.

State Rep. Tyrone Brooks, a longtime civil-rights leader from Atlanta, said there is enough evidence to seek indictments in the case.

"We don't need any more investigations. The evidence is there," said Brooks, an honorary member of the memorial committee.

"They should be charged and let a jury decide their fate."



Rosa Ingram, Roger Malcom's aunt, reads the Georgia Historical Society marker for the Moore's Ford bridge lynching outside Monroe, Ga.

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Sonny Savoie, center, a member of the National School Board Association's Board of Directors from St. Charles Parish, bows his head in prayer Thursday before the opening session of the Louisiana School Board Association Convention in Alexandria, La.



La. politicians jump to oppose federal court's prayer ruling

By DOUG SIMPSON
The Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, La. — A federal court ruling that bans prayer at school board meetings provoked a flurry of political protest in Louisiana this week, with elected officials of both parties jumping to support the long tradition of starting board meetings with invocations to God.

The ruling, issued by a federal judge, blocked a school board north of New Orleans from beginning meetings with a prayer. The judge found the prayers — some referring to God's "darling son, our savior Jesus Christ" — breached the line between church and state.

Louisiana politicians criticized the judge. The governor, a congressman and other officials blasted the ruling and pledged support for an anticipated appeal to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeal. Gov. Kathleen Blanco, a Democrat, said she'd file a

"friend of the court" brief opposing the ruling, and Republican Congressman Bobby Jindal said he'd introduce a resolution in Congress next week, also supporting the prayer tradition.

"I just have to say that these prayers, where public officials ask for the Lord's guidance, are entirely appropriate," Blanco said in a speech to the Louisiana School Boards Association on Friday. "In my book, they're constitutional, and I'm going to ask the court to change the ruling."

The lawsuit was filed in the Tangipahoa Parish, which led to the ruling by U.S. District Judge Ginger Berrigan.

The lawsuit was filed anonymously by a parent with backing by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The Louisiana School Boards Association held its annual convention this week, in this central Louisiana city, about 220 miles northwest of New Orleans. Organizers made a point of kicking it off with a prayer asking for guidance from God.

Ill. judge buries husband

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Police tightened security Saturday around a church where a federal judge's slain husband was to be memorialized, and the FBI offered a \$50,000 reward for help in finding anyone involved in the gun-shot slaying.

U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz and her children have been in protective custody since the judge discovered the bodies of her husband and mother in the basement of her home Monday.

FBI officials said Friday they don't have a suspect and asked the public's help in solving the crime. But FBI Agent Robert D. Grant said one avenue of investigation was white supremacist Matthew Hale and his followers.

Hale, 33, is facing sentencing next month for soliciting an FBI informant to kill Lefkowitz after she ruled against him in a trademark lawsuit. He has denied any in-



U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz watches pallbearers carry her husband's casket into St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Saturday in Evanston, Ill.

volvement in the slayings, which he called "a heinous crime."

A friend of Hale's, Kathleen Robertazzo, told The New York Times and Chicago Tribune in Saturday's editions the authorities seized 100 letters Hale sent her from prison and made copies of her computer hard drive.

Robertazzo told The Times the idea that Hale would be involved "defies logic." In the letters, she said, Hale describes singing opera in jail, taking Prozac and being buoyed by the presence of a man with the same name as Adolf Hitler's boyhood friend.

U.S. doctors pushing organ swap program

By LINDSEY TANNER
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Kidney transplant specialists pushed Thursday for a national organ swap program that they say could be lifesaving for thousands of ailing patients on transplant waiting lists.

The swap, already done at about 30 U.S. hospitals, would in-

volve patients who need transplants and have relatives or friends willing to donate but whose kidneys aren't a match. Each patient-donor pair would be matched with another pair to allow reciprocal transplants.

"It's quite a gift," said Ron Lazar, of North Canton, Ohio, who received a kidney transplant at the Cleveland Clinic in November after his doctors found a nearby Ohio couple in the same predicament.

Lazar's wife, Kathy, had the wrong blood type but her kidney was a match for Debbie Pratt, who like Lazar, had life-threatening kidney disease. And Pratt's husband, Gary, turned out to be a match for Ron Lazar.

"I feel like it was good luck and a prayer that we came up with a match," Lazar, 57, said Thursday.

Creating a national "paired kidney exchange" would allow transplants for about half the 6,000 U.S. patients yearly who have willing donors with incompatible kidneys because of different blood types or other reasons, said Dr. Robert Montgomery, director of Johns Hopkins University's Comprehensive Transplant Center.

"The payoff is huge," said Montgomery, who organized a conference in Chicago where dozens of specialists gathered to develop a blueprint for a national paired organ exchange program.



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Experts not surprised by primate attack

BY KIM CURTIS AND
TERENCE CHEA
The Associated Press

HAVILAH, Calif. — Chimpanzees come across to the public as little darlings, often in diapers and always willing to hold hands.

But they're really aggressors, primate experts say, more than capable of carrying out attacks as violent as one that left a man fighting for his life.

Generally weighing between 120 and 150 pounds with strength much greater than man, chimps in the wild are known to kill chimps from neighboring groups, hunt other primates and even attack humans.

"Male chimps are intensely territorial. They defend their territory against any perceived threat," said

Craig Stanford, a professor at the University of Southern California who studies primate behavior. "Chimps can be violent at times just as humans can be."

On Friday, authorities continued to investigate how two chimps

at an animal sanctuary escaped from their cage and mauled St. James Davis, 62. They were shot to death during Thursday's attack by the son-in-law of the sanctuary's owners, Virginia and Ralph Brauer.

Animal Haven Ranch, about 30 miles east of Bakersfield, has held state permits to shelter exotic animals since 1985. It is allowed to house up to nine primates at one



St. James, top, and LaDonna Davis, of West Covina, Calif., visit their chimpanzee Moe at Animal Haven Ranch in Caliente, Calif., in October 2004. Moe was taken from the Davises' Los Angeles home in 1999 after biting off part of a woman's finger. On Thursday, St. James Davis was attacked by two other chimps at Animal Haven Ranch while visiting Moe.

time and is home to one spider monkey and six chimpanzees.

"A big part of the investigation will be figuring out whether the owners were in compliance with regulations," Sheriff's Cmdr. Hal Chealander said.

State wildlife and county health authorities were testing the chimps for rabies and other diseases that could affect the victims' health, Chealander said.

Davis, 62, and his wife, LaDonna Davis, 64, were visiting the sanctuary to celebrate the birthday of a 39-year-old chimpanzee, Moe, who was taken from their home in 1999 after biting off part of a woman's finger.

The couple had brought Moe a cake and were standing outside his cage when the two young male chimps, Ollie and Buddy, attacked the man.

Two other chimps, females named Susie and Bones, also escaped from the cage. They were recovered outside the sanctuary five hours later.

Susie and Bones could have played a role in the attack, primate experts said.

"We know that one of the most reliable predictors of increased male aggression is the presence of sexually receptive females," said Jeffrey French, a psychologist who studies primate behavior at the University of Nebraska, Omaha.

The chimps chewed off most of Davis' face, tore off his foot and all of his fingers, and attacked his other limbs and genitals. Davis was transported to Loma Linda University Medical Center, where he had surgery late Thursday night.

The medical center would not release any information about Davis' condition on Friday. Hospital spokeswoman Julie Smith said the family requested confidentiality.

LaDonna Davis was bitten on the hand. She was released from the hospital Friday.

The Brauers would not speak to reporters, but a family friend gave a statement, which read: "All of us here at Animal Haven Ranch are praying for the recovery of St. James Davis and LaDonna Davis."

"This is the only incident in 20 years of operation," the statement said.

Kim Curtis reported from Havilah, and Terence Chea reported from San Francisco.

S. Davis

L. Davis



Arnold will always be Mr. Olympia to buff fans

BY ERICA WERNER
The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The world knows Arnold Schwarzenegger as a movie star. Californians know him as their governor. But he'll forever be Mr. Olympia to bodybuilders competing in the annual Arnold Classic.

"It's like when an all-time winning coach retires, you still call him coach," said Andy Giorlando, a massive bodybuilder who spent Friday posing inside a cage in Columbus' convention center. As the Arnold Fitness Weekend got under way, crowds packed a cavernous exhibit hall where booths hawked products from whey power drinks to hair plugs to saunas. Giant men walked arm in arm with women who looked like they could crush the average man's skull.

Indifferent to the snow flurries outside, they wore short-shorts, bikini tops and muscle-T's.

On a stage at the end of the hall, oiled women in bikinis flexed to pounding music.

Schwarzenegger, the muse of this singular subculture, arrived at the women's final Friday night with his wife, Maria Shriver, and their four children.



California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, right, congratulates Ms. Figure International Jenny Lynn on Friday at the Arnold Classic in Ohio.

He handed out trophies in three women's divisions, including best figure competition, which went to a fellow Californian, Jenny Lynn. The Alamo, Calif., woman, who has won the event three years in a row, noted that she voted for Schwarzenegger, calling it a "surreal experience" to receive her trophy and \$10,000 check from him.

Schwarzenegger presented the top female bodybuilding award to Yaxeni Oriquen of Venezuela, telling the muscular woman she would have given him some competition during his bodybuilding days.

Among bodybuilders, weightlifters and other devotees of the

muscular form, the acclaim for Schwarzenegger appears universal.

People only differ in whether they describe him as the father of bodybuilding or its godfather, as an icon or a god or "the man."

"He's the godfather of this sport. He's inspired a whole bunch of people," said Michael Ogawa, a 35-year-old personal trainer from Las Vegas, who was manning a booth advertising "triple-layer Bonanza bars."

"He's an icon," said Irving Gelb, a photographer for Musclemag International who said bodybuilders reverse Schwarzenegger. "It's like he's a bescon, giving them hope and strength. He's the father of the sport."

Lawmakers push against new eyeball jewelry trend

BY MARY TALLON
The Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Some Illinois lawmakers want to make sure the twinkle in your eye doesn't come from jewelry.

Repulsed by a body modification offered at a Dutch institute — where tiny metal hearts and half-moons are surgically embedded in the whites of the eye — one lawmaker has proposed banning the practice in Illinois.

A House committee Thursday approved legislation that would make it a felony to implant jewelry in someone's eye.

"I don't think anybody should be messing with the eyeball," Democratic

Rep. Kevin Joyce said Friday. The procedure involves making a tiny slice in the membrane covering the eye and slipping in a small, flat piece of metal. The result is a shiny shape in the white of the eye. The procedure is performed under local anesthesia.

Dr. Janak Koirala, assistant professor of medicine at South-

ern Illinois University, said he is concerned about the possibility of infection or other damage — risks that would last as long as the person kept the jewelry in their eye.

"It's not like piercing the skin," he said.

In the United States, at least one ophthalmologist is offering the procedure, but a tattoo artist said lawmakers are giving the issue more attention than it deserves.

"Most people in the Midwest, when it comes to body modification, are very conservative," said Kevin Veara, the

43-year-old owner of Black Moon Tattoos.

He conceded, however, that as

tattoos become more mainstream, people in Europe and the U.S. coasts are undergoing more daring and possibly dangerous body modifications — larger and deeper piercings through various body parts.

"It's like you're not a freak anymore if you have a tattoo," Veara said. "To be a freak, you've got to step up a little bit."

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Kevin Veara
Owner of
Black Moon Tattoos

Gag order no joke to Leno

Brad Garrett of 'Raymond' delivers host's Jackson jokes

BY LAURA WIDES

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Jay Leno says he can still write the Michael Jackson jokes, he just can't tell them.

So while the "Tonight Show" host waits to hear whether he is exempt from a gag order barring potential witnesses from discussing Jackson's child molestation trial, Leno called on actor Brad Garrett to act as his Jackson joke-telling surrogate.

"As I'm sure you know, I was called as a witness in the Michael Jackson trial," Leno told his audience Friday night. "I'm going to tell the jury the same thing I'm telling you right now. I only rode that llama once. I didn't know it was underage."

"I'm not allowed to tell any Michael Jackson jokes. I can still write them," Leno added before handing the reins to Garrett. The co-star of "Everybody Loves Raymond" then reeled off several one liners, including this one: "They said this trial will probably last six months, although Michael Jackson asked for some time off to entertain the troops."

"OK, they're Cub Scout troops, but they're still troops."

Leno, who has been subpoenaed to testify at Jackson's trial, is seeking an exemption to Superior or Court Judge Rodney S. Melville's gag order, citing his right to free speech.

Jackson, 46, has pleaded not guilty to charges of molesting a boy; conspiracy and administra-

ing an intoxicating agent, alcohol, to his alleged victim.

A legal motion filed on Leno's behalf argues Melville couldn't have intended for the order, issued more than a year ago, to limit "public personalities" from commenting on the case.

Applying the order to Leno would be prior restraint in violation of the First Amendment and the California Constitution, the motion argues, and it asks the judge to clarify or lift it.

On Thursday, one of Jackson's attorneys, Robert Sanger, filed a response, arguing Leno should not be exempted from the order.

"While the need for a protective order is unfortunate and does come at some cost, it is necessary to protect Mr. Jackson's right to a



Jay Leno

fair trial," Sanger wrote.

Then the lawyer tossed in his own zinger.

"One is reminded of the depression that overtook the comedy community when Richard Nixon stepped down from the presidency," he said in a footnote to his motion.

Jackson's jewelry causes stir in Austria

The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — Austrians recognized Michael Jackson's star, the one he wore on his chest, that is.

The pop singer has been photographed before recent court appearances in California wearing what experts here say is the "Order of Vienna," a medal awarded to artists, businessmen or others of merit, Austria Press Agency reported.

The gold star with an eagle in the center has been bestowed to about 50 people a year for their contributions to society.

The only problem is that the 46-year-old Jackson has not been among the prize's recipients.

The singer's staff bought the medal at an antique shop in downtown Vienna, APA reported.

It is illegal in Austria to wear such medals if one has not earned them, and Jackson theoretically could face a fine in Austria.

City officials say they don't plan to press charges.

Family of accuser praises star on video

The Associated Press

SANTA MARIA, Calif. — The family of Michael Jackson's accuser praised the singer and called him a father figure in a video shown to the jury in the pop star's child molestation case Friday.

"[My son] was the one who

asked him, 'Can I call you daddy?' and he said 'Of course,'" the accuser's mother said in the video.

Throughout, the family used the words "nice," "humble," "funny" and "fatherly" to describe Jackson.

The video was recorded Feb. 19-20, 2003, two weeks after the

airing of a TV documentary that damaged Jackson's image.

It was presented as the 18-year-old sister of the accuser testified for a second day. Prosecutors allege Jackson's associates coerced the family into making the video by holding them captive.

The boy, 13 at the time, re-

called in the video his first visit to Neverland and how he asked Jackson if he could sleep in his room. Jackson said it was OK if his parents gave permission, which they did, the boy said.

Prosecutors allege that the boy was molested sometime after the video was made.

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Concealed guns

TX AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry signed a concealed handgun reciprocity agreement with South Carolina.

The deal allows those with concealed handgun licenses from Texas and South Carolina to legally carry concealed handguns in either state. Texas now has reciprocity agreements with 17 states.

Pricey pipeline

NV LAS VEGAS — The Southern Nevada Water Authority said a pipeline to bring water to Las Vegas from rural Nevada could cost more than \$2 billion. Officials said the price would include 461 miles of pipeline, four pumping stations and about 200 miles of power lines. The project would reduce dependence of southern Nevada's growing population on the Colorado River.

Snow wipes out tests

MD BALTIMORE — At least 18 of Maryland's 24 school districts postponed the state's annual standardized tests because snow days have cut into preparation time. The tests were scheduled to begin this week. Many districts say students need to be back at school for at least a day before testing can begin. Also, some new teachers haven't been trained in test administration.

Pet scammer

GA ATLANTA — Police arrested a man they say took advantage of people searching for missing pets. Police say Andre Gould counted as many as 17 people in six states to wire him \$85 for a pet carrier to fly their dogs back to them. Gould received \$3,000 since December, but the owners never got their pets, police said.

Same place, new name

MO JEFFERSON CITY — After nearly two decades of struggle, Southwest Missouri State University will get a new name. The House voted overwhelmingly to drop Southwest from its name. The 120-35 vote sends the bill to Gov. Matt Blunt, who supports the change to Missouri State University. It would take effect Aug. 28.

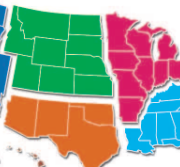
Rundown runway

CA SANTA PAULA — State inspectors won't allow Santa Paula Airport to reopen until the runway is lengthened. Erosion by the Santa Clara River's rolling storm runoff shortened the 2,650-foot runway to 1,200 feet. The shorter length failed to meet safety requirements set by the California Department of Transportation. The airport is losing \$16,000 a day in revenue.

Ferry bill gains steam

HI HONOLULU — Lawmakers have cleared the way for plans to link the main Hawaiian Islands by ferry, transportation cheaper than flying but feared by some residents for its possible risks to the environment.

After hearing three hours of testi-



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

mony on both sides of the issue Wednesday, the Senate Transportation Committee voted to hold a bill that would have required a detailed environmental review for the proposal.

"That goes a long way in sending a message that the state really wants this," said John Garibaldi, chief executive of Hawaii Superferry Inc. "They're not going to put up roadblocks."

Hawaii Superferry and some state officials had said requiring an environmental review could have scuttled the first serious attempt in years to set up an interisland ferry system. Garibaldi said the requirement would have jeopardized \$200 million in funding.

Environmentalists are worried about traffic, transportation of alien pest species and endangering humpback whales.

Trailer wreck kills 2

LA SHREVEPORT — Two people were killed when three tractor-trailers collided on Interstate 20, police said.

One of the rigs was traveling eastbound when it crossed the median around 7:30 p.m. and hit another tractor-trailer in the westbound lane. A third tractor-trailer then collided with the other two.

Authorities have not identified the two bodies that have been pulled from the wreckage, Caddo Sheriff Steve Prator said.

One rig was charred, Prator said. It is blocking both westbound lanes of the interstate about three-fourths of a mile east of the Texas state line. The accident also



Now that's a yawn

Waiting for his owner, Sandy Hoad, Cheyenne the Great Dane catches some rays through the sunroof the family SUV in a shopping mall parking lot in Bainbridge, Ohio.

spilled cartons of orange juice and frozen turkeys onto the highway. Authorities expect westbound traffic to remain blocked at Exit 3 well into the night, the sheriff said.

Rabbit at risk?

ID BOISE — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to decide by May 16 whether threats to the North American pygmy rabbit warrant a yearlong review that could lead to protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The agreement came in a settlement of a U.S. District Court lawsuit by environmental groups that contended the FWS had refused to consider their petition for protection of the rabbit.

The settlement was approved Thursday by Judge B. Lynn Winmill in Boise.

A similar review was given to the greater sage grouse, which shares the rabbits' habitat. It was completed Jan. 7, when Fish and Wildlife officials opted against protection for that species.

No parole for killer

CA RIVERSIDE — A California man convicted of killing an off-duty police officer nearly 19 years ago, in one of the nation's first "road rage" fatalities, will not be released on parole.

Patricia Dwyer was killed on Aug. 22, 1986, after being shot through the chest by an irate motorist. Harold Harvey Hawks, 45, was convicted of second-degree murder and is serving a sentence of 15 years to life in prison.

Hawks' fifth request for release was denied this week by a two-member panel of the state Board of Prison Terms, which determined that Hawks' "total disregard for human suffering and the callous nature of the crime warranted more time in custody."

Name that monkey

NY NEW YORK — The right to name a new species of monkey sold Thursday for \$650,000 in an online auction, with the funds going to protect the Bolivian habitat where the species lives, the Web site that handled the sale said.

The winning bidder, who outbid Ellen DeGeneres, chose to remain anonymous for now, said Kelly Fiore, director of business development for the New York-based auction venue, Charity Folks.

There was no immediate information on what the winner planned to name the species, but an announcement might be made later, Fiore said.

Subway commercials

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Advertisements have invaded movie theaters, airplane video screens and ATMs, and now they're coming to the tunnels of San Francisco's subway system, where dark walls will be replaced by 20-second animated commercials.

The Bay Area Rapid Transit Board of Directors approved a plan for the tunnel ads, which affix hundreds of posters in sequence to give passengers the illusion of a movie between stations.



Going with the floe

Ice Park in Ouray, Colo.

John Parsons of Niwot, Colo., makes his way down an ice floe at the Ouray



A sinking feeling

continues to grow.

A two-story home in Lake City, Fla., sits on the edge of a sinkhole that



Unexpected home Patrick Doss, of Fredericksburg, Va., examines a stuffed bear in Gander Mountain outdoors store in Spotsylvania County, Va. Mike Ritter, of Alexandria, Va., killed the 9-foot, 1,000-pound Kodiak brown bear during a hunting trip to Alaska. He paid \$9,500 to have it stuffed and sent to his Virginia home, only to find it was too big to fit through the door.



Oh, what a feeling! Sergeant Tommi DeRudder screams to the crowd as she cruises down Main Street in Kalispell, Mont., during a homecoming parade for members of the 639th Quartermaster Company. The soldiers returned home from more than a year's duty in Iraq.



Battling a blaze Berwick firefighters Tim Deltrich, left, and Bruce Angel battle flames breaking through the roof of an off-campus student house near Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pa.



Frosty blooms Phillip Pickard walks under blooming redbuds smothered by snow in Roanoke, Va. Recent warm weather caused the trees to bloom, but a recent snow put spring on hold.

Alleged hazing death

CA SACRAMENTO — Four members of an unchartered fraternity were charged with involuntary manslaughter after a pledge died from drinking too much water during hazing.

Four other members of the Chi Tau fraternity at the University of California, Chico, were charged Thursday with hazing, a misdemeanor. The four people charged with manslaughter could face up to four years in prison.

Matthew Carrington, 21, died of water intoxication Feb. 2 after being forced to drink water throughout the night in the basement of the off-campus fraternity house.

Police officers arrested

NY NEW YORK — Five veteran police officers have been arrested on charges they accepted counterfeit Coach bags and other merchandise from a street peddler as bribes, a prosecutor said Thursday.

The officers, all assigned to Manhattan's 13th Precinct, were charged with third-degree bribe receiving, receiving a reward for official misconduct, and official misconduct, said Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau.

If convicted of the most serious charge of bribe receiving, the officers could be sentenced to up to seven years in prison.

The street peddler, Jamil Faied, 44, was charged with third-degree bribery, which also carries a prison sentence of up to seven years.

Chicken feet crackdown

OH CLEVELAND — Health officials have seized boneless chicken feet at several Ohio stores, part of an expanding effort to prevent an outbreak of the bird flu.

Officials planned to visit about 200 Asian restaurants and markets around Cuyahoga County on Friday, explaining the health risks involved with a product that the U.S. Department of Agriculture says was illegally smuggled into the country.

The U.S. government banned imports of birds and poultry products from Asia last year.

Some chicken feet, an Asian delicacy, are seized at a Cleveland grocery store on Wednesday. Authorities also found them at three stores in Columbus and one in Whitehall, said Paul Panico, head of food safety for the agriculture department.

Vegas mayor loves gin

NV LAS VEGAS — Sin City's mayor made no apologies Thursday after being criticized for extolling gin to a class of fourth-graders.

Mayor Oscar Goodman said he was just being himself when he told elementary school students that drinking was one of his hobbies and that the one thing he would want if stranded on an island is a bottle of gin.

"I answered the question honestly and truthfully," Goodman told reporters. "I'm not going to lie to children. I'm not going to say I would take a teddy bear or a Bible or something like that."

Asked by a reporter if he had a drinking problem, Goodman answered, "Oh, absolutely not. I love

to drink."

Moments later, he cut off questions and walked out of the news conference.

Cell phone ban

HI HONOLULU — Motorists who chat carelessly on their cellular phones while stuck in Hawaii's traffic may soon need to think of investing in a headset.

Anyone caught driving while using a hand-held cell phone would be subject to a \$200 fine under a bill that passed out of the House on Thursday.

The measure includes an exemption for those making calls because of an emergency.

Some lawmakers questioned the need for the bill.

It's already illegal to drive inattentively in Hawaii, said Rep. Galen Fox, R-Waikiki-Ala Moana, speaking in opposition of the bill on the floor of the House.

Big lobster a mere shell

PA PITTSBURGH — A gigantic lobster that may have survived two world wars under Prohibition before being plucked from the ocean will live on — but only as the shell of its former self.

The Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium plans to keep the shell of the 22-pound lobster, named Bubba, and use its remains to educate school children, said Rachel Capp, a zoo spokeswoman.

Some of Bubba's meat will be sent to labs for testing as officials try to determine why Bubba died, Capp said Thursday.

Postcard 68 years late

OR ROSEBURG — Roseburg-area businessman Edward Hammond never heard back on whether a Roseburg store was willing to handle the sale of his stamp collections.

That's because his postcard, mailed Oct. 13, 1937, didn't arrive until Monday.

Postal carrier Kelly Pace was sorting mail when he spotted the brown card with its printed one-cent stamp. It was addressed simply to "Roseburg Book Store, Roseburg, Oregon." That store opened in 1910 in a building now occupied by Roseburg Book & Stationery.

Pace delivered it with the rest of the day's mail.

Duane Dodge, a supervisor at the Roseburg Post Office, said the card is in good shape and speculated that it may have spent the last 68 years somewhere undisturbed.

Benadryl-related death

SC ABBEVILLE — The death of a 4-month-old child given Benadryl at a child-care center has drawn renewed attention to the over-the-counter allergy medication's unauthorized use as a way of quieting children.

Sherry Bayne, 44, owner of Sherry's Home Daycare was charged with involuntary manslaughter and neglect in the death of Caleb O'Daniel, who was given Benadryl without parental permission.

Since 2000, there have been nearly a dozen media reports nationally of Benadryl being used for sedation of children at day-care centers, with at least four ending in death.

Photos and stories from wire services

AFRTS Television Schedule

Updated sports listings are available on the first Scoreboard page in the sports section or AFN's Web site at <http://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil>

SPECIAL TO STARS AND STRIPES

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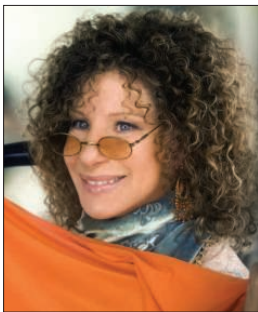
Want the facts? Opinions? Truth? Write Walter Scott, Box 5001, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-5001. Full name will be used unless otherwise requested. Volume of mail makes personal replies impossible.

Q The engagement of Seal and Heidi Klum reminded me of another blond singer and blonde beauty: Sammy Davis Jr. and Mai Britt, in the 1960s. What brought them together? — Annie Warren, Richmond, Va.

A The British pop star and the German supermodel were perfectly matched. Seal (born Sealhenry Samuel), 42, has embraced Heidi's year-old daughter Leni as his own and even learned to sing her to sleep with German lullabies. And Heidi, 31, describes Seal's Dec. 23 proposal as "a unique experience": After a helicopter ride, he gave her a 10-carat yellow-diamond ring at 14,000 feet, atop a glacier in Whistler, British Columbia. Cool.

Q Why did George W. Bush dump Brent Scowcroft as chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board? — Mark Clayborn, Nashville, Tenn.

A Because the retired General Scowcroft, 79 — who earlier served as the first President Bush's national security adviser — publicly criticized the second President Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq. For that, the White House has never forgiven him.



MovieWeb.com

Barbra Streisand, above, came out of nowhere with her comedic turn last year in "Meet the Fockers"; Kirstie Alley, below, spares no humiliation in her new cable show, "Fat Actress."



KRT

Q Robert De Niro and Cathy Moriarty were in New York for the 25th anniversary re-release of "Raging Bull" on Jan. 27, but not Joe Pesci. Why? — Dotty-Ann S., Laredo, Texas

A Because Pesci prefers golf to publicity events: He was playing in the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic in California with his pal, golf pro John Daly. Perhaps he wasn't missed. We hear his prickly personality is one reason Pesci, 62, has had so many ups and downs in his career — and three ex-wives — and hasn't landed a good role since "Casino" in 1995.

Q Kirstie Alley has a new TV show called "Fat Actress." Why would she humiliate herself? — C.E., Milwaukee, Wis.

A "Fat Actress," premiering stateside Monday night, was Kirstie's idea of a way to get the last laugh at those who have ridiculed her ballooning weight. The improvisational Showtime series comes across like a reality show, but it's fiction. "Parts of it are an exaggerated version of me," Kirstie, 54, tells us. "It's about the way I think and react to things, not how things really are."

Q I heard that Amy Tan, the best-selling author of "The Joy Luck Club," was ill. How is she doing? — J.W., Chevy Chase, Md.

A Tan, 53, tells us she's "95 percent functional" but still recovering from Lyme disease, which went undiagnosed for years despite visits to 11 doctors and \$50,000 in medical bills. She had severe neurological problems, including hallucinations and blackouts. Tan published her first nonfiction work, "The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings," in 2003. She's now writing a novel.

Q Can you tell me about the song that begins and ends the film "Closer"? — Kelly Carter, Dallas, Texas

A To bookend his dark film, director Mike Nichols chose "The Blower's Daughter," by Irish singer-songwriter Damien Rice, 31. It's included on "O," his 2003 debut album.

Q How has the recent death of Doris Day's son, record producer Terry Melcher, affected her? — Diane D. (city not provided)

A Day, 80, is still recovering from the loss of her only child. She and Melcher — who died of skin cancer in November at the age of 62 — were very close and shared a commitment to her nonprofit Doris Day Animal Foundation. The actress tells us she plans to dedicate a special area of her dog-friendly Cypress Inn in Carmel, Calif., to her son's memory.

Q I loved Barbra Streisand in "Meet the Fockers." What are the chances we'll see her in another movie soon? — Roy Watson, Salem, Mass.

A Good. Streisand, 62, hadn't done a film in eight years ("The Mirror Has Two Faces") or a comedy in 23 years ("All Night Long"). She told pals that she really enjoyed acting again. The critics and audiences loved Barbra as a comedienne — and she loves being loved. We predict she will find it hard to stay away from the screen for long.

Q I miss John M. Jackson as the admiral on "JAG." Why did he leave? — Germaline Pettit, Easton, Pa.

A After eight seasons, he'd done all he could with the role, says Jackson, 54. He decided to take time off to explore other acting mediums, including the New York stage. He has been replaced as the senior officer on "JAG" by David Andrews, 52, who plays Gen. Gordon Cresswell.



Seal, left, not only serenades fiancée Heidi Klum's daughter in German, he flew model Klum up a giant rock to give her a 10-carat rock of her own. It must be love.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Bird flu poses deadly threat Chicago Tribune

The prospect of an avian flu pandemic has served to remind the United States and the world that the forces of nature can be far more lethal than anything created by man. The World Health Organization recently warned that the risk of pandemic poses the "greatest possible danger" to the world as the virus has become "entrenched, endemic and virulent."

The U.S. isn't on the brink of an avian flu epidemic, Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reassured last week. But the experts agree it is only a matter of time before some new, virulent strain of influenza will threaten the world. The government is gearing up to test the first doses of an experimental vaccine, is stockpiling anti-viral drugs and has boosted disease surveillance. ...

What makes entirely new flu strains like the bird flu so deadly is that most people have no immunity. Humankind is in virgin territory, and the virus becomes an engine of death and disease with horrific consequences. ...

We know much more about influenza now than we did. All of that could slow or lessen the severity of an outbreak. But a new strain of flu has the potential to be a widespread killer.

Repeat 'don't ask, don't tell' The Miami Herald

The Pentagon policy on gays in the military, known as "don't ask, don't tell," isn't working. It hurts recruitment, impedes retention and costs much more. That's the conclusion of the just-released Government Accountability Office report that underlines the need to rethink this 12-year-old policy.

The report found that the Pentagon had to spend at least \$191 million to recruit and train replacements for some 9,500 soldiers discharged for their sexual orientation. Of that number, the GAO said, 750 died critical occupations in the military, including translators with skills in languages such as Arabic and Korean that are vital to existing U.S. security concerns. ...

Most of the discharged personnel wanted to remain in the service. More important, there is no evidence that they were causing problems. Their sex and orientation became known, which, under the policy, is forbidden.

Perhaps "don't ask, don't tell" made sense at one time, relaxing the rule that banned homosexuality altogether. It makes no sense today. The policy should be repealed, and men and women who want to serve their country in the armed forces should be allowed to do so without regard to sexual orientation.

A case for regulation The Sacramento (Calif.) Bee

The ChoicePoint Inc. debacle, the largest case of identity theft in U.S. history, shows why we need better privacy protection nationally. What happened? Crooks posed as check-cashing companies or debt-collection firms to gain access to ChoicePoint's database of personal data ranging from military records to incoming names, addresses, Social Security numbers and credit reports. These 50 fake com-



panies paid fees of \$100 to \$200 to ChoicePoint, which did not verify if they were real businesses with a "legitimate business reason" to access personal financial data.

We wouldn't even know about this scandal without a 2005 California law that requires businesses to notify consumers when personal data have been accessed illegally. ChoicePoint notified 35,000 Californians but now acknowledges that at least 110,000 people outside the state were affected. ...

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission should be overseeing information firms such as ChoicePoint as it does other companies that handle financial records. Regulations that govern credit reports should apply to their databases.

And access to credit reports should be better regulated. ...

Clear Skies Act clouds reality The Citizen's Voice, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

This week, a Senate committee is preparing to vote on President Bush's Clear Skies Act—an initiative that will overhaul the nation's emission standards. Contrary to its name, Clear Skies is an industry-friendly bill that actually weakens environmental laws already on the books and relaxes controls on toxic power-plant emissions. Under current provisions of the 35-year-old Clean Air Act, mercury emissions from power plants must be reduced to 5 tons per year by 2008. Clear Skies would permit 26 tons of mercury—or five times as much—to be released each year through 2010. ...

... When the Clear Skies proposal was drafted in 2001 (using language largely written by representatives of the power plant industry), scientists were forbidden by the White House to commission studies or present information that might undermine the proposed changes to mercury emission standards. And last week, two national organizations that went on record in opposition to the Clear Skies Act because it is "far too lenient" were ordered to turn over their financial and tax records to the federal government. If President Bush's initiative becomes law, it would be the first time in the history of the 1970 landmark Clean Air Act that pollution rules were relaxed instead of made more stringent.

Congress must not allow our country to move backward on critical environmental issues. The health of our nation's children is too important.

Reserve troops deserve better St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times

With ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military relies heavily on Reserve troops. Yet when those soldiers are wounded in the line of duty, too often they find they cannot rely on the military.

One of those is John Allen, an Army Special Forces team sergeant in Afghanistan, where he was seriously injured. Back home with damage to his brain, legs and vision, Allen sought a standard extension to his active-duty status so he could continue to receive medical care. Because of bureaucratic foul-ups, however, Allen has been dropped from active duty several times, which meant that some of his medical appointments were canceled. Even his pregnant wife was refused treatment at a military hospital until a commander intervened.

In all, Allen suffered a nearly \$12,000 loss of pay and, as he described it, "intense and indescribable stress." Unfortunately, Allen's situation is far from unique. ...

The military has struggled to keep up with a growing reliance on Reserve troops, but unless it starts treating them better it will be difficult to attract new recruits. ...

It is a national shame, and Congress shouldn't wait for the military to get around to fixing the problem.

Bush's swelling government The Anniston (Ala.) Star

When Bill Clinton announced the "era of big government is over," soon-to-be president George W. Bush wasn't listening. Or if he was listening, he wasn't paying attention. For today, in Washington, government is big and getting bigger. And instead of advancing the Gingrich-Dole agenda during his first term in office, Bush created a new Cabinet department, Homeland Security, and pushed through the USA Patriot Act that gave the government broad surveillance powers. Both of these increased the size of government and empowered Washington to oversee and regulate numerous state and individual activities.

To this, add the budget-busting Medicare prescription drug plan that will cost the nation who-knows-how-much before the decade is out. During Bush's first term, government did anything but shrink.

Fiscal conservatives and states-rights Republicans aren't buying it. Over at the Cato Institute, a conservative think-tank that usually supports the president, some

are openly hoping "that there would be an electoral rebuke of big (government) Republican like there was when the tectonic plates shifted in 1994."

The problem with that, of course, is such a shift could erase the GOP's small majority, if the Democrats are able to turn the political tables and become the party of "small" ("smart" would be the better word) government and fiscal responsibility. That would require dramatically changing the public perception of the Democratic Party, but with the Bush record to run against, it could happen.

Less fodder for death row Los Angeles Times

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision Tuesday to bar the execution of juvenile murderers has come at a pivotal time for the nation's long and agonized debate over the death penalty.

Unlike in the cases of the 100-plus death row defendants released in recent years when DNA or other evidence proved them innocent, Christopher Simmons' guilt was not in doubt. Simmons was 17 and a Missouri high school junior when he and a friend entered Shirley Crook's house, bound the 46-year-old woman with duct tape, drove her to a state park and threw her from a bridge to drown in the water below. Before the crime, Simmons bragged to friends that they would "get away with it" because they were minors. Soon after his arrest, he not only confessed to Crook's murder but agreed to provide a videotaped re-enactment for police. A jury sentenced him to death.

The question before the high court was the fairness and propriety of Simmons' sentence. ... Because teens are still emotionally immature, they cannot be held responsible in the same degree as adults for their actions, however unforgivable, wrote Justice Anthony Kennedy for a sharply divided court.

The high court's new ruling comes three years after it curbed the death penalty for the mentally retarded. Both decisions were pointedly grounded in what the court describes as a changing national consensus on capital punishment. Those decisions sound as much as reflect the public's doubts. ... Add in many other obvious inequities—name a rich person awaiting execution, for one—and death row is increasingly revealed for what it is: a dumping ground for the poorest defendants with the loudest lawyers rather than the most despicable killers.

Sunday Horoscope

It's slow going most of the day, as the moon void of course urges us to relax and let down our emotional guard. The moon moves into Aquarius later in the day, and it feels right to lightly connect with friends—things hardly get deeper than "How's the weather?" but genuine warmth emanates from even the most surface-level conversations.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(March 6). You explore the landscape of your own psyche this year and discover talents you didn't even know you had. Invest in yourself, and don't be stingy. There are many spring romantic offers, but you're not sure whom you trust. Keep things low key. Insist on getting paid better, and you'll find greater security in May. Love signs are Cancer and Scorpio.

ARIES (March 21-March 19). You help yourself most when you play straight. It's the perfect time to have straighten out misunderstandings (probably over money) with a partner. The much-needed dose of reality you provide is appreciated.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

The more honest you are, the better life feels. Don't waste time trying to change what has already been decided—on to the next thing! All forward movement is good, though it won't seem that way at first.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). If you give yourself the same advice you dish out, you're extra lucky! Being graceful in the face of change is more important than perfection. Romantic conversations go well, especially if your love is a Scorpio or Pisces.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Do what's necessary to create more love in your life. This might include working less, playing more and making yourself available to interested people. A dream clues you to where the end of the rainbow lies.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Some of your friends want to make it OK for you to be less than all you could

be. It's time to add new names and numbers to your database. This takes moxie, but those with moxie usually get what they want.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You want to draw the line, but ultimatums in love won't work. Keep the lines of communication open. It could be time to learn the fine art of allowing others to think that your plan was their idea.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

Your efforts to be interesting pay off. Fun and unusual topics of conversation make you irresistible to the very people you consider so sophisticated and special. A health breakthrough is featured, too.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

Exercise good judgment. Since your natural enthusiasm endears you to all you come in contact with, you'll be accepted into a variety of situations—some of which you should have nothing to do with.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Things could still go either way. This is where your faith will be tested. Keep up the positive intentions, and move forward, even when you're in convincingly skeptical company.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23-Jan. 19)

Profound happenings can take place. Separate yourself from your body, your actions and your beliefs. There's a soul inside you that can outshine all the limitations of this world, if you stop resisting.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

You'll find it difficult to keep your commitments, especially those you make to yourself. The written word is the single most effective tool you can wield now. Write what you will do, and you're 50 percent more likely to do it.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

If you don't know where you're going, it's hard to know when you've arrived there. It's not too late to declare your destination or change it. A bold and public action will help you center yourself on a single goal.

Creators Syndicate

Glamorous hotels put on the ritz

Where did the word "ritzy" come from?

"Ritzy" comes from the Ritz hotels, named for their founder, Cesar Ritz. Cesar Ritz opened the first Ritz hotels in London and Paris in 1905. He had built his reputation in the luxury hotel business with positions in fashionable European hotels and resorts and his cultivated connections with the old money of Europe and served as a guide and mentor to the nouveau riches of America. After managing the new Savoy Hotel in London, Ritz opened his own luxury hotels, and his son carried on the tradition by opening Ritz hotels around the world.

The fame of the hotels quickly

made "the Ritz" a well-known symbol of opulence. F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1922 titled one of his stories about the Jazz Age "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz." Even today, people will disparage their own humble residences with comparisons to the Ritz. "To put on the ritz" came to mean "to indulge in ostentatious display," the meaning that Irving Berlin celebrated in his 1929 musical tribute to glitz, "Puttin' on the Ritz."

The derivative adjective "ritzy" was first recorded in 1920.

This column was prepared by the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. Readers may send questions to Merriam-Webster's Wordplay, P.O. Box 261, 47 Federal St., Springfield, Mass. 01102.

Put affair in past and do best to work it out with husband

Dear Abby: I am a 36-year-old married woman. "Vern" and I have been married for 10 years and are childless by choice.

We have had our share of problems, but for the most part, I've learned to put them in perspective.

Eight months ago, I started flirting with a guy at work.

"Jason" is married with two small children. At first the flirtation seemed harmless. The next thing I knew, we were having a hard-heavy affair.

I have never been so drawn to any man. I became convinced that this was my chance.

Jason meant I was no longer in love with Vern, so I left my husband.

Vern was devastated. I didn't tell him there was someone else. I said I was unhappy, which was the truth. I got my own place, and the affair continued until Jason's wife became suspicious. Then Jason started pulling back. He said he was worried about not being able to see his kids.

Finally, Jason told me he thought it would be a good idea for me to go back to Vern. I begged him to change his mind and said I'd be his other woman for as long as it takes.

I was so in love. He made me

laugh, listened to me and made me feel special. He was everything my husband wasn't.

I am now back with Vern. I care for him, but the spark is long gone. He goes out on his way to make things right for me, but he no longer trusts me because he's heard rumors. I want our marriage to work, but all I do is think about Jason.

—Confused in Alaska

Dear Confused: While you're thinking about Jason, please remember that although he was amusing and a good listener, and the chemistry was strong, he was also a liar and a cheater. He may have made you feel special, but when the chips were down, his wife and children were more important to him.

Your husband wasn't born yesterday. He still loves you. Vern took you back in spite of the rumors. You now have a second chance—but only if you reorganize your priorities.

If you want your marriage to work, you and Vern will have to admit that you had issues before you met, and seek professional counseling to work on them.

Dear Abby: I have known

Girl must let son of mother's boyfriend do an extra-generous

Dear Annie: I'm a 16-year-old girl who started at a new high school in September. I've made lots of friends and even met some boys I'm getting to know. My problem is what happened last summer.

My mother is seriously dating a man who has two children, ages 15 and 16. We've known him for six years. His 16-year-old daughter and I are so close, we feel like sisters. The problem is his 15-year-old son, "Max."

In June, Max wrote me a letter and told me that for the past two years, he has been in love with me. I felt the same way, and on several occasions, I took advantage of our feelings for each other.

However, this happened before I met some great guys at my new school.

I don't feel the same way about Max anymore, but he is still crazy about me. I know letting our relationship progress was wrong, and I'm going to have to live with what I did, but what should I do to help him get over me so we can still be friends? Avoiding him is not an option.

—Boston Student

Dear Boston: It might help to

explain to Max that the way one date is your stepbrother and you don't right about maintaining a romantic relationship. Tell him you think it's best if you care for each other only as brother and sister. He will be heartbroken and angry at first, but chances are, he will soon meet girls at school who interest him.

Stay friendly, but do not encourage his crush by flirting or allowing to last summer's activities. Treat him like a brother, and hopefully, he will accept it.

Dear Annie: "Richard" and I have dated for five years. He is kind, gentle, honest and makes me laugh. We became engaged on my 50th birthday, and shortly after, Richard moved in with me.

For the most part, things are great, but Richard is the biggest packrat and sloth I have ever met.

I am a very neat person, but I am not obsessive about it. However, he is combining two households and needs to downsize. Richard refuses to discard anything, including old magazines, too-small or outdated clothing, worn-out shoes and endless amounts of junk. He has boxes full of old pens, loose nails, you

"Jerry" for four years. We met through my ex-boyfriend, "Paul." We have been dating for about nine months.

Paul and I have a child together, our daughter, "Elise," just turned 5. My ex and I rarely speak to each other, and when we do, it's only about Elise.

I love Jerry with all my heart and would never cheat on him. How can I convince him that I am no longer interested in Paul? Whenever we have an argument, he says, "Go back to Paul—maybe he can make you happy."

Would I be out of line if I told Jerry, "If you don't like the idea of me talking to my child's father, there's the door, and don't let it hit you on your way out?" We don't even live together, and he's trying to control me. How do you think it would be if we started living together—which we have discussed?

—Angry in Pennsylvania

Dear Angry: Jerry is insecure. Since you love him, do not give him an ultimatum. Because you share a child with Paul, there will always be contact of some sort. If Jerry is going to build a future with you, he must accept him until he is mature enough to do so.

Letters for this column—with your name and phone number—should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box #940, 505 N. Los Angeles, CA 90004. Please include your e-mail address to Abby on the internet at <http://www.earthlink.net/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

name it. On top of the hoarding, he leaves papers, food, cups and clothing all over.

I have begged Richard to clean up and de-clutter. I have silently cleaned up after him, hoping to be a role model. I have boxed things to give to charity, but he becomes angry. I have suggested a storage center. Nothing helps.

I love Richard and want to spend my life with him. But this relationship won't last if Richard doesn't figure out that he can't keep everything he has owned since childhood. This is driving me crazy. What can I do?

—L.A. Florence

Dear L.A.: Richard is obsessive-compulsive, and unless he is willing to admit he has a problem and seek help, nothing will change.

Urging him to contact the Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation (ocfoundation.org) at 676 State St., New Haven, CT 06510. If he refuses to do this for the sake of your relationship, you might want to reconsider living together—now, or in the future.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime staff of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to annie@mailbox.com or write to Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

RELIGION



Courtesy to Stars and Stripes

Above: High school student Kristina Kaczmarek works with Czech children last year during Club Beyond's trip to Czech Republic.
Right: Anthony Placeres removes dirt from holes dug at the work site of a playground the teenage ministry group built last year during the service trip.



Teen ministry group goes above, beyond

BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY
Stars and Stripes

FRIEDBERG, Germany — For a few hundred American teens in Europe, spring break won't be the typical hiatus from homework.

About 500 students, adult volunteers and community leaders from more than 20 U.S. military bases in Europe plan to travel to Slovakia next month as part of a Christian outreach program. They'll build playgrounds and ren-

ovate buildings on behalf of Club Beyond, a ministry for teenagers.

"It's work," said Tanya Raedeke, a volunteer for the ministry that covers the 284th Base Support Battalion, headquartered in Giessen, Germany.

"They are giving up their spring break to help others who are less fortunate."

Like a lot of other chapters, donations to support the effort are crucial.

At a 284th BSB community briefing in nearby Friedberg on

Wednesday, Raedeke's husband, Robert, was drumming up support for a fund-raising effort next Sunday that'll help defer some of the costs. The fund-raiser is slated for March 13 from 2:30-4 p.m. at the Alpine Club on Giessen Depot.

This will be the fifth year the Giessen/Friedberg chapter has held a "fund-raising dessert" for the spring break project, said Robert Raedeke, the community director for the Club Beyond 284th BSB chapter. The money also goes toward a summer trip

to Camp Darby, Italy. Last year's effort raised more than \$9,000.

Club Beyond is a Christian ministry for junior high and high school students interested in spreading the word and celebrating God.

Sixteen Giessen High School students and four adult chaperones plan to make the trip to Slovakia, scheduled for April 8-16. The group will join students and adult supervisors from other communities in a few villages in the north-central region of the

country. A year ago the ministry traveled to the Czech Republic.

Tanya Raedeke said the objective is to build playgrounds, renovate buildings and share Christian beliefs.

"For a lot of them," Raedeke said, referring to Slovakian youth, "this will be the first time they've heard of Jesus Christ."

Anyone wanting more information about Club Beyond should contact their local chaplain's office.

E-mail Kevin Dougherty at: doughertyk@mail.estripes.osd.mil

Seventh Day Slumber shows softer side of rock

BY BRIAN BOWERS
Stars and Stripes

Seventh Day Slumber likes its rock hard. However, the band turned to one of its less-aggressive tracks for its initial single from the new CD "Once Upon a Shattered Life."

The move appears to have worked because the rock ballad "Caroline" is climbing R&R's Christian Rock radio chart. The song portrays God forgiving someone you might call the "prodigal daughter." It describes how "yesterday is gone and everything that made you cry has fallen to the ground. I'm here to bring you home."

It's one of many songs that draws on the experience of the band members, notably frontman Joseph Rojas, who once had a \$400 a day cocaine habit.

The disc is packed with powerful portraits of a brokenness that leads to redemption and hope. "Broken Me" is about failed dreams but looks ahead to a different future. "Shattered" asks, "Will you rescue me and take me from this shattered life?" One of the most powerful songs on the disc is "Back in Time," a prayer for a relation-

ship with God that states, "I want to breathe hope instead of choking. I want to feel the fire deep inside."

Other songs are more praise-oriented, such as "Believe," a deep and meaningful statement of faith, and "Oceans from the Rain," which conveys amazement at God's power, consistency and love.

Seventh Day Slumber's first release on the BEC label is

rock solid.

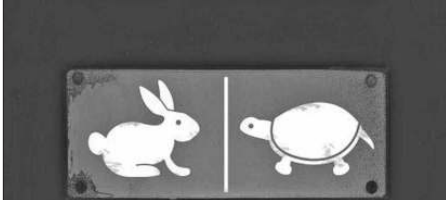
On the Web: www.seventhdayslumber.com.

Another band that went mellow for an initial release is The Afters, a pop/rock band that will spend the spring opening for MercyMe and Jeremy Camp.

The first single from "I Wish We All Could Win" is "You," a praise ballad that's planted at No. 11 on R&R's Christian airplay chart.

These four guys from Texas offer everything a good pop/rock band should — catchy riffs, good hooks and heart-felt lyrics. What sets their disc apart from recent releases by similar bands is the creativity they display as they explore their themes.

THE AFTERS I WISH WE ALL COULD WIN



INO RECORDS

Like fellow Christian rockers Seventh Day Slumber, rock/pop band the Afters decided to play it soft for their first single release from the new album "I Wish We All Could Win."

For example, "You" uses simple and effective terms to convey the nature of a relationship with God. "The Way You Are" covers similar ground but with power chords and in-your-face metaphors — "It's like atomic bombs in reverse/As if a glass could contain the sea, that's the way you are in me."

And "Someday," which gives the disc its title, opens as an acoustic ballad before exploding with energy as it expresses the wish that everyone could find the right

path.

The Afters got their big break when they caught the attention of Bart Millard, frontman for MercyMe, and became the first band to sign with his new Simple Records label. From all appearances, they deserved their shot and are making the most of it.

On the Web: www.theafters.com.

Today's Praise is a roundup of news and reviews from the contemporary Christian music industry. It appears on the Religion page.

E-mail Brian Bowers at: bowersb@stripes.osd.mil

YOUR MONEY



Photos by The Washington Post

Army Capt. Lonnie Moore, right, works out with 1st Lt. Stephen Rice during a physical therapy workout at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington. Both men were wounded in Iraq. Moore, of Wichita, Kan., says he has already received a few job offers, but will remain at Walter Reed through March.

Wanted: Injured vets to fill job vacancies

BY ELLEN MCCARTHY

The Washington Post

Recovering troops in high demand among contractors

Army Capt. Lonnie Moore lost his right leg and — he thought — his career last April when his convoy was ambushed on the road to Ramadi, in central Iraq. The injury led to some dark days at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington as Moore, 29, began his recuperation and contemplated life outside the military.

Within months, however, he had received job offers from a munitions company, an information technology firm and the Department of Veterans Affairs. And that's without sending out a résumé.

"People tend to seek us out," Moore said of veterans, particularly those who have been injured. "They know we'll be an asset to their companies and that we're not going to let our injuries stand in the way. ... Everybody I've known that's gotten out, they're not having a hard time finding jobs."

Through broad initiatives and individual requests, corporations have been actively recruiting veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, turning military hospitals like Walter Reed into de facto hiring centers.

Job offers aren't being handed out carte blanche, and companies say talent and fit are still the priorities. But executives seeking to rebuild troops say many of the skills acquired in the military are applicable in the private sector — particularly within companies that serve the government. A soldier who has led a platoon into war is probably capable of leading a unit at a private company, executives say. With government contracting in a boom, soldiers' security clearances and knowledge are also highly valued.

"They've got to be able to talk the language. And you can't teach a person that

language — it's a language you can only learn by being part of that culture," said Paul Evancoe, director of military operations at FHN USA Inc., a McLean, Va., weapons manufacturer with about 350 employees in the United States. The company is among those interested in hiring Moore.

The quest to seek an injured vet was both company-driven and personal, said Evancoe, who received a Purple Heart after being shot in Vietnam. Many FHN employees are veterans, so the company's atmosphere and values largely mirror that of the military, he added.

"If you take a guy and immerse him back into that culture ... it's going to be very positive. It's going to help the heal-

ing," Evancoe said. "It's not like I can hire every single guy, but when I have a job, I'm going to search out a veteran."

The Labor Department does not have statistics on job placement rates of veterans disabled in Afghanistan or Iraq. However, in 2003, the most recent statistics available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, veterans had an unemployment rate of 4.5 percent, compared with 5.9 percent for nonveterans.

The same study found that 9 percent of veterans suffered from a service-related disability; their unemployment rate was comparable to that of their noninjured peers.

Jeanne Lehowicz, a vocational counse-

lor stationed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, said she has a steady stream of inquiries from executives and recruiters — sometimes dozens a week, and typically more than the 50 to 75 servicemen she is working with at any given time.

One day the call might be from a giant defense contractor from Bethesda, Md., and the next, a small biomedical firm from Montana, she said.

"It's overwhelming. You want to respond and say 'Oh here's this guy I've got for you,' but that's not always the case," Lehowicz said.

The organizers of a career fair at Walter Reed in December expected a dozen or so companies to participate. By the night of the fair, more than 30 companies, including BAE Systems PLC, Science Applications International Corp. and Oracle Corp., had set up booths to pass out brochures and collect names.

"The equipment that we work on and maintain for the military is the same as they would have used," said Eugene C. Renzi, president of defense systems at ManTech International Corp., a Fairfax, Va., government contractor that sent recruiters to the career fair. "So when they get out of the military, we can put them right to work and utilize the skills they already have."

Joe Davis, spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said outreach efforts among government contractors is partly driven by executives with military backgrounds. There is a de facto alumni network, he said, and a collective memory of the way disabled veterans were treated after previous conflicts, particularly Vietnam.



"Veterans are getting good jobs right now," says Army Capt. Lonnie Moore, who lost his leg last year. Sgt. Robert Faulk, a physical therapy assistant, helps with his recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

SEE VETERANS ON PAGE 33



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AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.-Golf: Ford Championship (at Doral, 3rd round only).

AFN-Sports, 1 p.m.-Baseball: Davis Cup, Croatia at U.S.A., doubles (at St. Louis, 1st round).

AFN-Sports, 6 p.m.-Motor racing: Busch Series Mexico 200 (at).

AFN-Sports, 8 p.m.-College basketball: Kentucky at Florida.

AFN-Sports, 8 p.m.-College basketball: Teams TBD.

AFN-Sports, 8 p.m.-Auto racing: IndyCar Toyota-Indy 300.

AFN-Sports, 8 p.m.-NBA: Detroit at Sacramento.

AFN-Sports, 10 p.m.-College basketball: Duke at North Carolina.

AFN-Radio, 10 p.m.-NBA: Detroit at Sacramento.

Monday

AFN-Atlantic, midnight-College basketball: Women's Pac-10 (at).

AFN-Sports, 130 a.m.-NBA: Miami at Cleveland.

AFN-Atlantic, 2 a.m.-College basketball: Wake Forest at N.C. State.

AFN-Sports, 6 a.m.-College basketball: Wake Forest at N.C. State.

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m.-Golf: Ford Championship (at Doral, final round).

AFN-Sports, 9 p.m.-Tennis: Davis Cup, Croatia at U.S.A., reverse singles (at).

AFN-Sports, 9 p.m.-Baseball: Spring training, Chicago Cubs at Texas.

All times are Central European Time due to daylight savings. All listings are subject to change. Visit www.afn.net for more information.

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Toronto	1	0	1,000
Baltimore	1	1	.500
Cleveland	1	1	.500
Kansas City	1	1	.500
Los Angeles	1	1	.500
Tampa Bay	1	1	.500
Texas	1	1	.500
Chicago	1	3	.250
St. Louis	0	3	.000

Coles dealt to Jets; Skins get WR Moss

The Associated Press

ASHBURN, Va. — The Washington Redskins finally traded disgruntled receiver Laveranues Coles back to the New York Jets on Saturday and got the speedy Santana Moss in return.

Moss' agent, Drew Rosenhaus, said in a phone interview the deal was contingent on both players passing physicals. Moss had his physical scheduled for Monday at Redskins Park. A source within the league, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, also said Coles got the new deal he wanted, which held up the trade for the last week.

Terms of the deal weren't available. A message left for Coles' agent, Roosevelt Barnes, was not immediately returned.

Coles met with coach Joe Gibbs twice after the season to state his desire to leave the Redskins, following an unsatisfying year in the team's conservative offense.

He had 90 catches for 950 yards for a career-long 10.6 yards a catch and only one touchdown

in the Redskins' 6-10 season, the year before, under pass-oriented coach Steve Spurrier. Coles had 82 receptions for 1,204 yards and six touchdowns.

Coles emerged as a favorite of Chad Pennington in 2002, but left the Jets as a restricted free agent after the season, when the team declined to match the Redskins' seven-year, \$35 million offer—including a \$13 million bonus. He was critical of the Jets and coach Herman Edwards after he left, though it appears the organization is willing to look past that.

As for Moss, the game-breaking receiver had a breakout year in 2003, with 1,105 yards and 10 touchdowns. But his productivity slipped in 2004, when he had 45 catches for 838 yards and five touchdowns while battling through a sore hamstring. He also was critical of his role in the Jets' conservative offense, wondering why he didn't get the ball more.

Moss is entering the final year of his contract, and Rosenhaus expects to have the receiver signed to a new deal shortly after the trade is completed.

Agassi falls to Ljubicic in return to Davis Cup

The Associated Press

CARSON, Calif. — Andre Agassi stumbled in his return to Davis Cup play, and Andy Roddick stepped up to square things with the Americans.

Croatia's Ivan Ljubicic beat Agassi in straight sets in Friday's opening match. Roddick bounced back after a first-set loss to defeat Mario Ancic 4-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 in the second and final match of the day.

Ljubicic downed Agassi 6-3, 7-6 (7-0), 6-3 in the match of Croatia's No. 1 player against the U.S. team's No. 2.

The first round was to resume on Saturday, with twins Mike and Bob Bryan scheduled to face Ljubicic and Ancic.

Roddick will play Ljubicic in Sunday's first match, with Agassi slated to go against Ancic in the fifth and final match of the first-round competition.

The loss was only the sixth in 36 Davis Cup matches for Agassi, who has played on three championship teams.

The 25-year-old Ljubicic, off to a fine start on the tour this year, took control of the match with his serve, often in the mid 130-mph range and as high as 141 mph.

On Saturday, Slovakia eliminated defending champion Spain, taking an insurmountable 3-0 lead after Saturday's doubles match to advance to the quarterfinals.

Majer wins men's downhill on Lillehammer Olympic course

KVITFJELL, Norway — Hermann Majer won a World Cup

Sports briefs

downhill on Lillehammer's Olympic course Saturday, while Bode Miller finished fourth and extended his overall lead.

Majer, one of the greatest downhillers of all time but a non-winner in Norway since 2001, covered the 3,035-meter Olympia-bakken in 1 minute, 46.10 seconds. Austrian countryman Mario Scheiber was runner-up in the second straight downhill, finishing 0.13 seconds behind.

Majer's victory was his first in the downhill this season. He has 49 wins in the downhill, super giant slalom and giant slalom, one short of second-place Alberto Tomba of Italy on the career list. Ingemar Stenmark of Sweden tops the list with 86.

Ambrosi Hoffmann of Switzerland took third, 0.31 off Majer's pace. It was his best result of the season.

Miller, coming off two disappointing gate races last weekend in Slovenia in which he scored no points, was 0.65 back as he improved his chances of becoming the first American since Phil Mahre in 1983 to win the overall title.

Miller has his closest rival, Benjamin Raich of Austria, by 31 points going into this weekend's races. Raich, whose strength is in gate races, only managed 12th, 11.1 seconds behind.

Miller leads Raich by 37 points 1-203 to 1246 — going into Sunday's super-G. Majer is third with 1,066. Five races remain, and each victory is worth 100 points.

Brees signs with Chargers

After breakout season, QB gets one-year, \$8M deal

BY BERNIE WILSON

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Drew Brees was in an \$8 million mood on Friday.

The quarterback signed a one-year contract that more than quadruples his pay from last year, when he came off the scrap heap to lead the San Diego Chargers back to the playoffs for the first time in nine seasons.

The Chargers put the "franchise" tag on Brees on Feb. 17, meaning he'll get \$8,078,000 next year, or the average of the NFL's five highest-paid quarterbacks in 2004.

Brees returned from a vacation in Australia late Thursday night and signed the deal as soon as he could on Friday.

"I was ready and eager to get the thing official," said Brees, who made \$1.56 million in base pay last year.

Brees doesn't seem offended that the Chargers aren't interested in giving him a long-term deal — for now, anyway — or that coach Marty Schottenheimer has refused to order him as the starter for next year, meaning he'll have to compete with Philip Rivers in training camp.

"Of course I want to be here, and of course I want a long-term deal, but the main thing is, I want to be here, I want to be a part of this," he said. "I just think we can do something special."

Brees was all but cast aside

last offseason, when the Chargers were coming off an NFL-worst 4-12 record. Brees was an easy scapegoat after throwing 15 interceptions and just 11 touchdown passes, getting benched for five straight games and being yanked from two others.

General manager A.J. Smith declared that the Chargers needed to "upgrade" at quarterback, then swung a draft-day deal that brought highly touted prospect Philip Rivers to town.

But Rivers held out for half of training camp and Brees kept his job. He threw 27 touchdown passes and just seven interceptions as the Chargers won the AFC West. Brees was voted Comeback Player of the Year and went to the Pro Bowl.

OT McKenzie goes from Jets to Giants

The Associated Press

Kareem McKenzie is moving, but he won't be changing his stadium address.

The former New York Jets right tackle will play his games at the Meadowlands next season as a member of the New York Giants after signing a \$37.75 million, seven-year contract on Friday.

McKenzie's deal included a \$12.5 million signing bonus and topped the \$36 million fellow tackle Jonas Jennings got from San Francisco on Thursday.

"Kareem is a powerful and durable player and will improve an important position to us. He adds to an offensive line that is young and signed," Giants General Manager Ernie Accorsi said.

The signing continued a very profitable offseason for a position that has rarely been considered glamorous. After McKenzie's deal and the contracts Jennings, Mike Wahle, Marco Rivera and Ben Hamilton signed on Thursday, NFL teams spent over \$134 million on offensive linemen in the first three days of the free-agent signing period.

The NFC champion Philadelphia Eagles spent their dollars on defense. The Eagles re-signed Pro Bowl middle linebacker Jeremiah Trotter to a \$15 million, five-year contract.

Trotter's contract includes a \$4 million signing bonus. After two last-luck years in Washington, Trotter returned to Philly last season and helped the Eagles lead the NFC in fewest points allowed at 16.3 per game.

Trotter started just seven games for the NFC champs, but his peers still voted him to a third Pro Bowl.

"We retained a good player who really wanted to be here and we really wanted to have here," said Eagles president Joe Banner.

New Cleveland Browns coach Romeo Crennel, whose New England Patriots shut down Philadelphia in the Super Bowl, quickly



filled his hole in the secondary by signing Baltimore Ravens cornerback Gary Baxter to a six-year contract. Anthony Henry, who led the Browns with four interceptions last season, signed with Dallas on Wednesday.

Crennel's already shaky offense added another question mark when quarterback Kelly Holcomb accepted a four-year deal from the Buffalo Bills. He opted to back up J.P. Losman rather than vie for the starting job in Cleveland, leaving the Browns with Luke McCown and Josh Harris at the quarterback position.

Holcomb was initially expected to re-sign with the Browns after the team released starter Jeff Garcia. But talks with Cleveland broke down this week when Crennel suggested he had other plans.

A couple of ex-Giants were active on Friday. Quarterback Kurt Warner was in Chicago talking to the Bears. Defensive lineman Lance Legree, primarily a part-time player, signed with the Jets.

New York also formally announced the signing of Derrick Baylork, the ex-Kansas City Chief who will back up Curtis Martin at running back, and

signed Denver tight end Jeb Putzier to an offer sheet worth \$12.5 million. The Broncos have a week to match it.

In other signings:

■ Tackle Oliver Ross signed a five-year contract with the Arizona Cardinals. The 6-foot-5, 322-pound lineman started 16 regular-season games and both of Pittsburgh's playoff games last season.

■ Cleveland signed punter Kyle Richardson, who was with Cincinnati last season.

■ Buffalo signed free agent Mike Gandy to help bolster its offensive line. Drafted by Chicago in the third round in 2001, he started five games at right guard last season and 14 at left tackle in 2003.

■ Miami signed free agent safety Travarres Tillman to help rebuild its depleted secondary. He had five tackles in six games with the Carolina Panthers last season before being sidelined by a broken arm.

■ Tampa Bay re-signed veteran free agent tight end Dave Moore.

He will return for his 12th season with the Buccaneers after making three catches for 17 yards in 15 games last season. He also is the team's long snapper. Moore ranks third in Bucs history with 161 games played.

■ Arizona re-signed running back Damien Anderson and released running back Larry Nend.





New York Mets' Pedro Martinez pitches during the first inning against the St. Louis Cardinals on Friday at Roger Dean Stadium, in Jupiter, Fla. Martinez struck out three and gave up three hits in three innings.

Sosa, Martinez fitting right in

The Associated Press

Yes, Sammy Sosa's hop is just as joyful in a Baltimore Orioles uniform and Pedro Martinez's fastball is just as sizzling in New York Mets colors.

The two superstars, along with Mark Mulder, Carl Pavano, Derek Lowe and Jon Lieber, all made their debuts with new teams Friday.

Sosa homered and had two hits in Baltimore's 3-1 loss to the Florida Marlins at Fort Lauderdale, Fla. After sending a drive over the left-field wall in the seventh inning, Sosa inaugurated the post-homer routine he perfected with the Chicago Cubs, hopping in the batter's box then touching his heart and pointing skyward upon reaching home.

Sosa, playing DH because of a slight groin strain, came to the Orioles last month in a trade with the Cubs, who all but gave away the slugger after he wore out his welcome in the Windy City.

"Those guys love me already," he said. "I'm such a perfect fit here, I'm so happy to be here in a new house. It's incredible, let me tell you the truth. I feel like I've been here forever."

At Jupiter, Fla., Martinez picked up right where he left off last season. In three innings, the 33-year-old right-hander allowed three hits, struck out three and was credited with the win — a 7-5

Spring training

victory over the St. Louis Cardinals — in his first outing since leaving Boston for a \$53 million, four-year contract with the Mets. Martinez threw 60 pitches, but new Mets manager Willie Randolph had no problem letting Martinez go that long this early in spring training.

"We're not going to get crazy about pitch counts," Randolph said.

"We don't worry about that because he's in great shape. You see him work. He's not going to break. He'll be fine."

Mulder, on the other hand, was wild from the start and lasted just one inning for St. Louis. He walked four and gave up a two-run single to Cliff Floyd in his first appearance since he was traded by Oakland on Dec. 18.

"It's not that big a deal. I'm not that concerned with results in spring training. I just want to make good pitches," Mulder said. "Those are things you get out of the way now. As long as you're healthy and making good pitches, that to me is the only thing that matters."

At Kissimmee, Fla., Roger Clemens kicked off his 22nd major league season with two scoreless innings for the Houston Astros in a 5-4 victory over the Cleveland Indians.

"I'm just glad to get everything under way," said Clemens, his right shoulder, elbow and ankle heavily wrapped in ice. "I felt really good out there."

In other games:

Pirates 3, Yankees 6: At Bradenton, Fla., Pavano gave up three hits in two scoreless innings in his first start since signing as a free agent with New York. He struck out two. Ben Grieve, trying to win a job on the Pittsburgh bench, went 2-for-3 with a double and three RBIs.

Jason Giambi is slated to make the trip to Lakeland on Saturday to play his first road game.

Braves 3, Dodgers 2: At Kissimmee, Lowe pitched three scoreless innings in his Los Angeles debut. Lowe, whose last appearance was in Boston's World Series-clinching victory, gave up only a single to Andrew Jones.

Dodgers outfielder J.D. Drew got a chance to face his former team. Bodei losttly in his two at-bats by the pro-Atlanta crowd, he struck out both times.

Tigers 3, Phillies 0: At Lakeland, Fla., Lieber made his first appearance with Philadelphia and gave up a hit, walked one and struck out a batter in three innings. Detroit prospect Tony Giarra had a two-run homer and Craig Monroe had an RBI double. Nate Robertson struck out three over two innings.

Canseco agrees to testify; others face subpoena

BY RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Jose Canseco is ready to testify. Reluctant players and executives might be forced to appear before a congressional committee.

Canseco, the MVP-turned-best-selling author, had no qualms about testifying at a March 17 hearing on steroids in baseball.

"We'll be there on the 16th and 17th," Canseco's agent, Doug Ames, said Friday.

The House Government Reform Committee is preparing to

subpoena witnesses, a person familiar with its deliberations said on condition of anonymity.

Jason Giambi, Canseco's former Oakland teammate, said it was "highly unlikely" he would testify before the committee. Boston pitcher Curt Schilling was unsure whether he would appear and whether the hearing would be productive.

"It depends on what it's for," Schilling said in Fort Myers. "I mean, if this is a McCarthy thing hunt all over again, then no. But, again, I don't know any of the specifics around what it entails and what's going on."

Mark McGwire, who combined with Canseco to form the Bash Brothers on the World Series champion Athletics, also was undecided.

"We're still evaluating," McGwire spokesman Mark Altieri said. "I can't say one way or the other."

Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig and executive vice president Sandy Alderson had not made their decisions, spokesman Rich Levin said, and San Diego General Manager Kevin Towers declined comment.

The players' association had not yet decided whether union head Donald Fehr would testify or what recommendation it would give to the invited players, according to union general counsel Michael Weiner.

"We think it's a little early to talk about who's confirmed their attendance," said David Marin, a spokesman for Rep. Tom Davis, the Virginia Republican who chairs the committee.

At the Yankees' training camp, Giambi said he had a brief conversation with his agent, Am Tellem, about the invitation.

"I have no idea what they are trying to do," Giambi said. "I'm just concentrating on playing baseball."

In December, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that Giambi told a federal grand jury in 2003 that he had used steroids. Barry Bonds, who was not invited by the committee, told the grand jury he used a substance that prosecutors believe contained steroids, the paper said.

Giambi has declined to discuss steroids publicly, but issued a general apology last month to teammates and fans. Bonds testily stepped questions when he arrived at spring training.

"The fact that these questions are surrounding him certainly doesn't dilute the fact that that's a Hall of Famer before all the questions were asked," Yankees manager Joe Torre said of Bonds.

"That's the thing I think is going to be lost in this whole thing — everybody is curious about the last year or two years or whatever, and it's going to demolish his whole career."

In an informal conversation with reporters from the Oakland Tribune and ESPN on Thursday, Bonds said performance-enhancing substances are not a big deal.

"You're talking about something that wasn't even illegal at the time," Bonds said. "All this stuff about supplements, protein shakes, whatever. Man, it's not like this is the Olympics. We're entertainers. If I can't go out there and somebody pays \$60 for a ticket, and I'm not in the lineup, who's getting cheated? Not me."

"So we all make mistakes. We all do things. We need to turn the page. We need to forget about the past and let us play the game. We're entertainers. Let us entertain."

Baltimore's Sammy Sosa and Rafael Palmeiro were invited to testify, as was Frank Thomas of the Chicago White Sox.

"March 17 is my wife's birthday. That should tell you right there what my answer is," Palmeiro said at Baltimore's camp in Fort Lauderdale. "Honestly, I don't really have anything to say on the subject."

Sosa isn't ready to respond.

"I don't know about that yet. I have to call my agent," he said.

AP Sports Writers David Ginsburg in Fort Lauderdale, Howard Imler in Fort Myers and Bernie Williams in San Diego contributed to this report.

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Andretti, Penske lead IRL into 10th season

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS

The Associated Press

Helio Castroneves' fence-climbing skills got a little rusty.

The two-time Indianapolis 500 champion performed his scaling victory celebration only once last year. And that didn't count until the IndyCar Series season finale, when "Spiderman" won for the first time in 19 races.

"It was hard, all season long waiting to win a race. ... It was a great relief," he said. "I don't want to wait that long this year."

Castroneves won't have to sit Team Penske can pick up with the momentum it built at the end of last season.

Not only did Castroneves win the finale at Texas, he finished the season with an IRL-record four straight poles. The Penske team obviously was figuring out car setups with the smaller 3.0 engines the series switched to after the Indianapolis 500, and he was unchanged this year.

"It was a learning curve, and we learned a lot with that situation," Castroneves said.

Sam Hornish Jr. started on the front row alongside his Penske

2005 IRL schedule

March 6 — Toyota Indy 300, Homestead
March 19 — XM Satellite Radio 500, Phoenix, Ariz.
April 3 — Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, Fla.
April 30 — Indy Japan 300, Suzuka
May 29 — Indianapolis 500
June 11 — Bombardier 500, Fort Worth, Texas
June 25 — SunTrust Indy Challenge, Richmond, Va.
July 2 — Argent Mortgage Indy 300, Kansas City, Kan.
July 8 — Firestone Indy 200, Glendale, Tenn.
July 13 — Michigan Indy 400, Brooklyn
July 24 — SunTrust Indy Challenge, Richmond, Va.
Aug. 21 — Honda Indy 225, Fountain, Colo.
Aug. 28 — TBA, Sonoma, Calif.
Sept. 11 — Delphi Indy 300, Joliet, Ill.
Sept. 25 — Watkins Glen Indy Grand Prix, N.Y.
Oct. 16 — Toyota Indy 400, Fontana, Calif.

teammate twice during that four-race stretch and rolled off from the No. 3 spot another time.

Penske had booked victories last year, with two-time IRL champion Hornish winning his debut race with his new team just ahead of Castroneves — in the season opener at Homestead-Miami Speedway.

Andretti Green Racing's four-driver team dominated in between, winning eight of the 14 races with 36 top-five finishes.

Tony Kanaan became the first driver in a major racing series to finish every lap — 3,305 in 16 races — and won the title.

Teammate Dan Wheldon was second. Dario Franchitti and Bryan Herta, the other Andretti Green drivers, were sixth and ninth.

"Well, we set the standard for sure," Kanaan said. "Right now, yeah, they're definitely looking at us, and they're looking up. But you know, we're also looking — we're looking for Penske, we're looking for Rahal."

All will be at Homestead-Miami Speedway on Sunday for the start of the IRL's 10th season.

Hornish has won three of the four IRL races on the track. The 300-mile race is where Kanaan had his worst 2004 finish — eighth in the opener before 15 straight top fives that included three victories.

This will be the IRL's longest season with 17 races — including its first two-course events.

The IRL will break from its all-oval format in the third race this season, on a temporary road course through downtown St. Petersburg, Fla. The series also will

run on road courses in Sonoma, Calif., and Watkins Glen, N.Y., later in the year.

Former driving champion Michael Andretti, who co-owns the team with Kim Green, got an IRL title in his just second season as owner.

Roger Penske won 11 national open-wheel championships over three decades before moving from CART, but the car owner goes into his fourth IndyCar Series season without a title. Buddy Rice finished third in points and won the Indianapolis 500 for the team owned by former driver Bobby Rahal and late night talk show host David Letterman.

There are 22 drivers on 13 teams this season.

IRL founder Tony George is even a team owner now, having acquired the assets of Kelley Racing this offseason.

"Why? Because I believe in this series. I believe in the opportunity it represents," George said. "As the offseason wound down, it became obvious that we needed a car count. We were going need to keep all that equipment that Tom had for sale in the system. There were a lot of teams looking at acquiring bits and pieces of it. But I



Michael Andretti, above, made a successful transition from driver to team owner. Andretti Green's Tony Kanaan won the IRL title last season, and his three teammates all finished in the top 10.

felt that the best opportunity was to try and keep it together for someone."

Ed Carpenter, George's 23-year-old stepson, will drive the car for Vision Racing LLC. George has promised his ownership will not influence decisions and rulings by race officials.

Danica Patrick moves from the Toyota Atlantic Series to become the third woman in the IndyCar Series. She's part of Rahal Letterman's three-car team with Rice and Vitor Meira.

Men's conference basketball tournament scoreboard

America East Conference

At Binghamton University Events Center, Vestal, N.Y.
First Round
Friday, March 4
Mid-Baltimore County 78, N. Hampshire 73
Stony Brook 65, Hartford 64
Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 5
Albany, N.Y. vs. Binghamton
New York State vs. Maryland-Eastern Shore
Northeastern vs. Stony Brook
Binghamton vs. Maine

Sunday, March 6
Albany-Binghamton
Maryland-Eastern Shore vs. Vermont
Maine-Baltimore County winner
New York State vs. Stony Brook
Maine-Binghamton winner

At Higher-Seeded Team
Saturday, March 12
Semifinal winners

Atlantic Sun Conference

At The Club Event Center, Nashville, Tenn.
First Round
Thursday, March 3
Gardner-Webb 64, Troy 62
Central Florida 81, Mercer 68
Belmont 67, Georgia State 66
Jacksonville 66, Lipscomb 64
Semifinals
Friday, March 4
Gardner-Webb 77, Jacksonville 76
Central Florida 66, Belmont 64
Championship
Saturday, March 5
Gardner-Webb vs. Cent. Florida

Big Sky Conference

First Round
Saturday, March 5
Eastern Washington at Weber State at Sacramento State
At Memorial Coliseum, Portland, Ore.
Semifinals
Thursday, March 3
Montana State vs. higher-seeded Portland State
Portland State vs. lower-seeded first-round winner

Championship
Wednesday, March 9
Semifinal winners

Big South Conference

First Round
Tuesday, March 1
Charleston Southern 66, Liberty 69
High Point 88, NC-Ashville 93, OT
West Virginia 74, Coastal Carolina 69
Birmingham-Southern 69, Radford 40
Semifinals
Thursday, March 3
Charleston Southern 58, High Point 55
West Virginia 79, Birmingham-Southern 54
Championship
Saturday, March 5
Charleston Southern at Winthrop

Colonial Athletic Association

At Southern Coliseum, Richmond, Va.
First Round
Friday, March 4
William & Mary 83, James Madison 54
Delaware 76, Towson 56
Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 5
Del. Dominion vs. William & Mary
Drexel vs. Hofstra
Virginia Commonwealth vs. Delaware
NC-Wilmington vs. George Mason
Sunday, March 6
Del. Dominion vs. William & Mary winner
Drexel-Hofstra
Virginia Commonwealth vs. Carolina
Carolina vs. George Mason winner
Championship
Saturday, March 7
Semifinal winners

Horizon League

First Round
Tuesday, March 1
Wright State 61, Butler 57
Loyola of Chicago 75, Youngstown State 75
Illinois-Chicago 84, Cleveland State 65
At U.S. Cellular, Milwaukee
Second Round
Friday, March 4
Detroit 61, Wright State 58
Loyola of Chicago 87, Illinois-Chicago 81
Semifinals
Saturday, March 5
Wisconsin-Green Bay vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Wisconsin-Milwaukee vs. Loyola of Chicago
Championship
Saturday, March 5
Milwaukee
Wisconsin-Milwaukee vs. Loyola of Chicago
Semifinal winners

Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference

At HSBC Arena, Buffalo, N.Y.
First Round
Friday, March 4
Canisius 62, Marist 60
Marquette 88, Loyola, Md. 67
Loyola of Chicago 75, Youngstown State 75
St. Peter's vs. Marist
Rider vs. Canisius
Fairleigh Dickinson vs. St. Peter's
Semifinals
Saturday, March 5
Niagara vs. St. Peter's-Iona winner
Canisius vs. Canisius winner vs. Marquette-Mahatman winner
Championship
Saturday, March 7
Semifinal winners

Mid-Continent Conference

At John O. Hampton Arena, Tulsa, Okla.
First Round
Saturday, March 5
Oklahoma State vs. South Dakota
Missouri-Kansas City vs. Oakland, Mich.
Sunday, March 6
Indiana-Purdue-Indianapolis vs. Western Illinois
Valparaiso vs. Chicago State

Missouri Valley Conference

Semifinals
Monday, March 7
Oral Roberts vs. Indiana State winner vs. IUPUI-Indiana State winner vs. Valparaiso-Chicago State winner
Championship
Tuesday, March 8
Semifinal winners
At Savits Center, St. Louis
First Round
Friday, March 4
Indiana State 63, Bradley 61
Drake 82, Evansville 68
Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 5
Southern Illinois vs. Indiana State
Northern Iowa vs. Southwest Missouri State
Wichita State vs. Drake
Creighton vs. Illinois State
Semifinals
Sunday, March 6
Southern Illinois-Indiana State winner vs. Northern Iowa-SW Missouri State winner vs. Creighton-Illinois State winner
Championship
Monday, March 7
Semifinal winners

Northeast Conference

First Round
Thursday, March 3
Fairleigh Dickinson 78, St. Francis, N.Y. 60
Wagner 68, Robert Morris 67
Long Island Univ. 70, St. Francis, Pa. 67
Semifinals
Friday, March 4
Wagner at Monmouth, N.J.
Long Island Univ. at Fairleigh Dickinson
Championship
Wednesday, March 9
Semifinal winners

Ohio Valley Conference

First Round
Tuesday, March 1
Tennessee Tech 72, Eastern Illinois 68
Austin Peay 77, Samford 69
Eastern Kentucky 74, Tennessee State 68
Southern State 63, Murray St. 58
At The Gaylord Entertainment Center, Nashville, Tenn.
Semifinals
Friday, March 4
Austin Peay vs. Tennessee Tech 61
Eastern Ky. 69, Southeast Missouri 51, 52
Championship
Saturday, March 5
Austin Peay vs. Eastern Kentucky

Patriot League

First Round
Friday, March 4
At The Hartford Center, Worcester, Mass.
Lehigh 77, Colgate 61
Holy Cross 85, Army 42
Sunday, March 6
At The Soja Pavilion, Lewisburg, Pa.
Bucknell 70, Lafayette 34

Southern Conference

Semifinals
Sunday, March 6
At The First Center, Worcester, Mass.
Holy Cross vs. Lehigh
At The Soja Pavilion, Lewisburg, Pa.
Championship
Monday, March 7
Bucknell-Lafayette winner vs. American
At Higher Seeded Team
Monday, March 11
Semifinal winners
At McKean Arena, Chattanooga, Tenn.
First Round
Wednesday, March 2
Elon 64, Wake Forest 58
Georgia Southern 68, Western Carolina 57
Appalachian State 68, The Citadel 59
Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 3
Davidson 67, Georgia Southern 71
NC-Greensboro 73, Georgia Southern 71
Chattanooga 77, East Tennessee State 79
Appalachian St. 63, Col. of Charleston 60
Friday, March 4
NC-Greensboro 73, Col. of Charleston 68
Chattanooga 57, Appalachian State 51
Championship
Saturday, March 5
NC-Greensboro vs. Chattanooga

Sun Belt Conference

At Denton, Texas
First Round
Thursday, March 3
Florida International 90, Alabama 87
At The Super Pit, Arkansas
First Round
Friday, March 4
Middle Tennessee 77, New Mexico State 63
At The Super Pit, Arkansas
Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 5
Arkansas-Little Rock vs. Florida International
Denver vs. Arkansas State
Sunday, March 6
Western Kentucky vs. New Orleans
La-Lafayette vs. Arkansas State
Semifinals
Friday, March 7
Denver-Arkansas 51, winner vs. W. Kentucky
Arkansas-Little Rock vs. La-Lafayette
Championship
Saturday, March 8
Semifinal winners

West Coast Conference

At The Leavett Center, Santa Clara, Calif.
First Round
Friday, March 4
Pepperdine 91, Loyola Marymount 79
Santa Clara vs. San Francisco
Second Round
Saturday, March 5
San Diego vs. Pepperdine
San Francisco vs. Santa Clara
Semifinals
Sunday, March 6
Georgia vs. San Diego-Pepperdine winner
San Francisco vs. Santa Clara
Championship
Monday, March 7
Semifinal winners

American ousts Navy in overtime

The Associated Press

LEWISBURG, Pa. — Matej Crenk scored a career-high 30 points and Linas Lekavicius scored with 4.7 seconds left in overtime to help American beat Navy 85-83 in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament on Friday.

American (16-11) plays Bucknell, which beat Lafayette 70-34, on Sunday.

Navy's David Hooper made his fifth three-pointer with 34 seconds left to tie the score 83-83 before Lekavicius' game-winner.

Navy freshman Corey Johnson made a three-point shot to tie the score 77-77 and force overtime.

Raimonda Petrusauskas and Andre Ingram each had 13 points for American and Lekavicius added 12.

Matt Fannin and Greg Sprink each scored 20 points for Navy (9-19) and Hooper added 17.

Holy Cross 76, Army 42: At Worcester, Mass., Kevin Hamilton scored 16 points as top-seeded Holy Cross pulled away in the second half for a victory over Army in the first round of the Patriot League tournament.

Holy Cross (23-5), which won its 15th straight game, will play Lehigh at home in the semifinals on Sunday. Lehigh, the defending tournament champion, defeated Colgate 77-60 on Friday.

Matt Bell led Army (3-24) with 13 points.



Phoenix Suns coach Mike D'Antoni talks with point guard Steve Nash during a recent game. D'Antoni developed his philosophies on basketball and life during years of great success in Europe, and he has brought a welcome taste of Italy to spice up the American game.

D'Antoni brings Italian flavor to Arizona desert

BY BOB BAUM

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Mike D'Antoni is an easygoing mix of small-town West Virginia and cosmopolitan Milan, and he's brought a taste of Italy to spice up the bland NBA game.

His audacious philosophy as coach of the Phoenix Suns: Let the players play — and the faster the better.

"It's the players' game," he said. "To me, a coach has a big role in it, and we can mess it up. I don't want to mess these guys up. I want to put them in the best light I can to perform at the highest level. They're the ones who are going to get us over the top."

Phoenix and its frenetic style have lit up the NBA this season, routinely ringing up triple-digit scores and keeping pace with San Antonio for the league's best record, an astonishing turnaround from last season's 29-53 team.

The Suns lured Steve Nash away from Dallas, and his talents mesh perfectly with D'Antoni's vision of how the game should be played.

"He finds that great balance between letting guys play their game and be confident," Nash said, "and at the same time being accountable. I think he's a terrific coach."

D'Antoni, 53, grew up in Mul-

"I like their rhythm of life [in Italy], and their passion for life, and also what they deem important and not important. I think they have it right."

Mike D'Antoni

Phoenix Suns coach

lens, W.Va. the son of a longtime, highly successful basketball coach in a town that was crazy for the sport. He went on to Marshall University, then played two-plus seasons for the Kansas City Kings and another year with the ABA's Spirits of St. Louis.

He was released after two games with San Antonio in 1977.

"That's when I went to Europe and spent the next 20 years," he said.

D'Antoni's two decades in Italy, as a player and then a coach, shaped his view of basketball and the world. He learned the language, and he met his wife Laurel, an American fashion model.

As an intense point guard with an Italian-sounding name, he became a fan favorite for his hustling defense and playmaking ability.

"They talk about the heart and passion for the game," D'Antoni said. "That's their big thing. Their fans are like that and their society is like that a little bit. It just kind of fit what I was doing."

He played 13 seasons for Milan, leading the team to five Italian League titles, two Cups of Europe, two Cups of Italy, one Korac Cup and one Intercontinental Cup.

"They were the powerhouse," said Suns assistant Marc Iavaroni, who played against and briefly with D'Antoni in Italy.

"He was big, because they gave him dual citizenship and tried to get him on their national team. He was the head of the snake, like Steve is the head of the snake here."

Along the way, D'Antoni fell in love with Italy.

"I like their rhythm of life, and their passion for life," he said, "and also what they deem important and not important. I think they have it right."

The camaraderie among players was incredible, he said.

"After every game we went to a restaurant as a team — friends, family, everybody," D'Antoni said. "There were about 20 or 40 of us every night, and we'd sit there and we would eat for five or six hours. You drink wine, talk,

laugh and get to know everybody. That was the best experience.

You develop bonds that are just incredible as you're winning and playing."

When his playing career ended, D'Antoni turned to coaching, directing Benetton Treviso to the Cup of Europe and Cup of Italy in 1995 and the league title in 1996-97.

As much as he enjoyed Italy, the lure of the NBA was too much.

Friend Allan Bristow made him director of player personnel, then assistant coach in Denver. D'Antoni was promoted to head coach, but after going 14-36 in the lockout-shortened 1999 season, he was fired and general manager Dan Issel named himself coach.

D'Antoni went on to scout for San Antonio, then spent a season as an assistant to Mike Dunleavy in Portland. With his NBA situation uncertain, D'Antoni went back to Italy and coached Benetton to another Italian League title.

When Suns general manager Bryan Colangelo was looking for experienced assistants to work under Frank Johnson, D'Antoni was one of the picks. Again, he couldn't resist the NBA, particularly with an organization with a good reputation, and in a city that appealed to him.

The Suns made the playoffs in D'Antoni's first year as an assistant, but faltered badly last season, and Johnson was fired. The job went to D'Antoni, who welcomed it but worried.

"It was more 'here we go again,'" he joked, "because I wanted to be here a long time, and once you get the head spot, your odds go up dramatically that you're not going to be here a long time."

Then came the big trade that sent Stephen Marbury and Penny Hardaway to the New York Knicks, clearing huge cap room but dooming the Suns to a miserable season. D'Antoni supported the move as necessary in the long term, and he was given a two-year contract extension at the end of the season.

The blockbuster deal cleared the way for signing Nash and Quintin Richardson, and D'Antoni had the players to go with the style he advocated. The results have been far beyond the coach's expectations.

"The first month we'd go in at halftime and we were thinking 'What are we going to tell the team?' I mean, we're playing so well it's almost like 'Man, I don't want to talk to them because I don't want to mess anything up.'"

Around the NBA, the Suns have become the symbol of a refreshing renaissance of fast-paced play. America West Arena is rocking again. The fans like the style, and so do the players.

"It's nuts," D'Antoni said, "to say you have to walk it up and play ugly to win."

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Braut help L.A. stay over .500

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles Lakers have been sitting on the playoff bubble all season, and it's starting to feel uncomfortable. So Kobe Bryant took matters into his own hands.

Bryant scored 10 of his 40 points in the final 2:15 and the Lakers snapped a four-game losing streak with a 108-103 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Friday night. It was Bryant's 37th career game with 40 or more points, and his seventh this season.

Caron Butler had 20 points and Lamar Odom added 18 points and 11 rebounds, helping prevent the Lakers from slipping under the .500 mark for the first time since they were 3-4.

"That was a big motivational factor for us," Bryant said. "We knew this was a big game and pretty much a must-win situation against a great team, and we were able to pull it off."

Bryant hasn't been on a team that lost five straight since he was a high school freshman. The Lakers haven't lost more than four straight since the 1993-94 season, when they dropped their final 10 games with Magic Johnson coaching the team.

"We were on a four-game skid, and it was important for us to get off that skid," Bryant said. "No way did I want to lose five games in a row. I don't like losing five in a row, let alone five in a row."

The Lakers shot 51.9 percent from the field, despite going 1-for-18 from behind the three-point line. The victory put them a half-game ahead of idle Denver and a full game ahead of Minnesota in the race for the eighth and final Western Conference playoff berth.

"I know a lot of people don't even think we're even going to make the playoffs. But there's no reason why we can't slide up. That's our mentality," Bryant said.



Dick Nowitzki had 23 points and 13 rebounds and Jerry Stackhouse scored 19 points for the Mavericks, who have lost three of four following a six-game winning streak. The Mavericks have lost 27 of their last 28 against the Lakers in Los Angeles, the only victory coming last season.

Celtics 104, Bobcats 84: At Boston, Antoine Walker and Ricky Davis each scored 18 points and Gary Payton added 10 in his return to Boston's lineup. Boston is 4-0 since Walker returned to the team last week in a trade with Atlanta.

Payton, who re-signed Friday after being waived by Atlanta on Tuesday, played 21 minutes. He was traded to the Hawks—along with Tom Gugliotta, Michael Stewart and a future first-round pick—last week in the deal that brought Walker back to Boston.

Basketball Oklahoma City 102, Portland 90: The Blazers scored 10 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte.

Knicks 89, Bulls 87: Grant Hill scored 29 points and rookie Dwight Howard added 20 points and 15 rebounds to help Orlando snap New York's three-game winning streak.

Kevin Cato added 14 points, Steve Francis had 13 points and nine assists and rookie Jameer Nelson had 11 points and seven assists for the Magic.

Stephon Marbury led the Knicks with 22 points.

Warriors 103, Wizards 90: At Washington, Jason Richardson scored 16 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter and also had eight rebounds, four assists and three blocks for Golden State.

Troy Murphy added 20 points and 14 rebounds for the Warriors.

Larry Hughes scored 27 points for the Wizards.



The Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant, left, passes the ball past the Dallas Mavericks' Dirk Nowitzki during the second half Friday night.

Heat 104, Kings 83: At Miami, Dwyane Wade scored 22 points and Miami made Alonzo Mourning's formal homecoming a good one, getting double-digit scoring from all five starters.

Shaquille O'Neal had 18 points, giving him 23,177 for his career and tying him with Adrian Dantley for 17th in NBA history. Eddie Jones had 17 points—including a perfect 5-for-5 night—from three-point range—in Miami's fourth straight victory.

Mourning, who rejoined the Heat this week, played the final 3:37 and finished with four points and four rebounds.

Grizzlies 86, Raptors 75: Shane Battier scored 12 of his career-high 33 points in the fourth quarter to help host Memphis rally for coach Mike Fratello's 600th career victory.

Hornets 92, Jazz 85: J.R. Smith and P.J. Brown each scored 14 points to help the Orleans snap Utah's three-game winning streak.

Jackson Vroman added 12 points and nine rebounds. Andrei Kirilenko led Utah with 21 points.

Timberwolves 103, Bucks 97: At Minneapolis, Wally Szczarbaki scored 28 points, Kevin Garnett added 25 and Anthony Carter had a season-high 13 assists for Minnesota.

Michael Redd had 24 points and seven rebounds for Milwaukee.

Pacers 102, Bulls 99: At San Antonio, Tim Duncan made an 18-foot jumper with 38 seconds left to break a tie and Manu Ginobili added four late free throws for San Antonio.

Duncan finished with 31 points and 13 rebounds. Tony Parker had 25 points and eight assists and Ginobili added 19 points—13 in the second half.

Pacers 106, Blazers 97: Reggie Miller and Stephen Jackson scored 24 points each and Indiana spoiled Portland coach Kevin Pritchard's debut at home.

The Pacers snapped a three-game losing streak. Shaheed Abdul-Rahim led Portland with 27 points. Pritchard took over the Blazers as interim coach this week when the team unexpectedly fired Maurice Cheeks.

Sonics 95, Pistons 87: At Seattle, Rashard Lewis scored 18 points and Jerome James had seven highs of 16 points and seven rebounds for Seattle against Detroit's bruising front line.

Richard Hamilton led Detroit with 15 points. The Pistons were coming off a loss in Phoenix on Thursday night that snapped their eight-game winning streak.

Pacers put O'Neal on injured list

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — All-Star forward Jermaine O'Neal was placed on the injured list Friday by the Indiana Pacers, one day after he sprained his right shoulder in a game at Denver.

O'Neal has a subluxated sprain of the right

shoulder and will miss at least five games. He had an MRI examination before Friday night's 106-97 victory over Portland, then watched the game from the end of the bench, his arm in a sling.

The Pacers also waived forward Michael Curry and signed veteran free agent forward Dale Davis, who was waived by New Orleans this week.

O'Neal was injured with 4½ minutes left in the second quarter against the Nuggets when his right arm was knocked back by Denver's Francisco Elson.

"It was the most painful thing I've ever been through in my career, but it's part of the game," O'Neal said.

Pistons sign C Campbell

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — The Detroit Pistons added depth to their frontcourt Friday by signing center Elden Campbell.

The Pistons used Campbell, 36, to guard Shaquille O'Neal during last season's NBA Finals victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Bulls' Deng out 2-4 weeks

CHICAGO — The Chicago Bulls placed rookie Luol Deng on the injured list Friday because of a sprained right ankle that is expected to sideline him 2-4 weeks.

Deng, a 6-foot-8 guard-forward, was injured in the opening minutes against Houston on Tuesday night when he stepped on the foot of Rockets center Yao Ming.

Deng, the seventh overall pick in the 1997 draft, is averaging 12.2 points and 5.4 rebounds in 54 games this season.

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Rebirth: Defense, Gordon's finishing kick fuel Bulls' run

REBIRTH, FROM BACK PAGE

took over, with players never sure of their role. Paxson kept prep-to-pro projects Chandler and Curry, and shed anyone who wasn't a tenacious, defensive-minded player.

He picked up Kirk Hinrich in his first draft, then hit upon a bonanza last summer. In addition to taking Gordon with the No. 3 pick, he traded for Luol Deng, the seventh pick. He added Chris Duhon and signed Andrei Nocioni, who'd spent the past two years playing in Spain before helping Argentina win gold in the Athens Olympics.

Paxson dumped high-priced, long-term contracts to give the Bulls salary-cap flexibility.

"Nobody's ever had a place here, as far as knowing what you've got to come in and do," Chandler said. "Now I feel we've put together a nucleus that every guy has his individual thing that's making us win."

It starts with defense. The Bulls didn't allow 100 points for 26 straight games from Dec. 4 to

Jan. 24, and are holding opponents to 42.2 percent shooting, second in the NBA. They're sixth in the league in scoring defense.

On offense, Curry, Hinrich, Gordon and Deng average in double figures. Gordon (14.6) and Deng (12.2) rank second and third among rookies, and Gordon is fifth in the NBA in three-point percentage (44.7).

Gordon is generating some star power, too, thanks to his knack for monster fourth quarters. He's had double-figure fourth quarters in 16 games, most of any player in the NBA.

"I told him he might as well just stay in the locker room and we'll just get a buzzer for him for the fourth quarter," Chandler joked. "He'll run out and rip off his cape and get the crowd going."

Some fans have even dubbed him Ben "Rhymes with Jordan" Gordon. "It's flattering, but I try to keep that out," Gordon said. "I shouldn't even be mentioned in the same sentence as him. I know fans don't mean anything and they're just having fun.

But as a player, you have so much respect for a guy like that. I kind of just want to shy away from that."

The Bulls aren't dynasty material just yet. They still turn the ball over too much, a whopping 17.5 errors per game. They've gotten lax on defense lately, allowing 100 points or more in 11 of their past 14 games entering Saturday's game at Milwaukee.

In Tuesday's blowout loss to Houston, the Rockets had a double-digit lead by the end of the first quarter and led by as many as 39. Tracy McGrady scored 32 despite not playing in the fourth 17.5 errors per game. They've gotten lax on defense lately, allowing 100 points or more in 11 of their past 14 games entering Saturday's game at Milwaukee.

"We've been feeling a little too good about ourselves on occasion," Bulls coach Scott Skiles said after that game. "Hopefully, this will be something that knocks us out of it and will bring us down to earth."

Fans, though, aren't likely to abandon their giddy optimism. The Bulls' past five home games sold out, and the average attendance of 19,439 fans only Detroit, Dallas, Miami and New York.

Mickelson continues birdie barrage at Doral

Leads Andrade by two after near-record 36-hole score

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Phil Mickelson was atop the leader board for the ninth consecutive round in stroke play, and no one was terribly surprised — least of all, his closest pursuer Friday in the Ford Championship at Doral.

Mickelson showed up at Doral nearly five hours before his tee time to fine-tune a game that appears to need no work, then played the Blue Monster without a bogey for a 6-under 66 that gave him a two-shot lead over Billy Andrade.

"I don't know what the big hoopla about him is," Andrade said after a 66. "He's one of the best players in the world. He has been one of the best players in the world since he was 12. When you get guys that are that talented and you get on rolls, they're obviously tough to beat."

Mickelson is on a roll in second rounds; his average score is 64.8 in five tournaments. That includes a 60 in Phoenix, which gave him a share of the lead. He's been there ever since, including a wire-to-wire victory last month at Pebble Beach.

"The only thing that matters is leading on Sunday," said Mickelson, whose 14-under 130 total was one short of the 36-hole record at Doral. "That's kind of the goal right now."

Mickelson was the first to concede that this tournament is far from over. There are a bevy of world-class players on the Blue

Monster, and several remain in range.

Two-time Masters champion Jose Maria Olazabal had a 69 and was at 11-under 133, and Billy Mayfair birdied three of the last four holes for a 67 and was another shot back.

Tiger Woods went eight consecutive holes without a par — that included three straight bogeys for the second time this year — for a 2-under 70 that put him in a pack of players at 9-under 135 that included No. 1 Vijay Singh, David Toms and defending champion Craig Parry.

There were so many players jockeying for position that when Sergio Garcia missed a par putt on the 18th hole, he dropped 10 spots on the leader board, down to 8-under 136 with Retief Goosen and Jim Furyk.

"There's so many good players right there," Mickelson said. "I just feel like I've got to go out and keep pushing to make birdies if I want to stay there."

When Andrade chipped in from 50 feet for birdie on the ninth hole, that broke a 10-way tie for the lead. Before long, it became a race between him and Mickelson to see who wound up on top going into the weekend. They were on different sides of the course, and the final hole was decisive.

Andrade finished on the 18th hole, and he pulled his tee shot into the water. After taking a drop and hitting into shaggy grass atop a bunker, he had to make a slick 20-footer to salvage bogey.

Mickelson looked like he might be in trouble when he fanned his tee shot on the

par-5 eighth, headed behind some palm trees at best or into the water at worst. Instead, it smacked a fan in the right shoulder and bounced back into the short grass.

"Just another fairway hit," Mickelson said with a sneaky grin.

He finished on the par-3 ninth with a 7-iron into 8 feet for his 16th birdie of the tournament.

"There's still two days left here, and I'm going to put up a great fight," Andrade said. "And hopefully, it's enough to beat him and everybody else."

The Blue Monster, already susceptible without strong wind, was softer because of overnight rain.

Els trails Jimenez by one in Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Miguel Angel Jimenez posted a tidy 4-under 68 on Saturday to take a one-shot lead in the Dubai Desert Classic.

After making a four-putt double bogey from 20 feet on the first hole, Ernie Els made seven birdies, shot 67 and enters the final round one stroke behind the leader.

"I still don't know what I did there on the first hole," said Els, trying to win for the first time in 2005. "I guess you are never too old to learn. You have got to respect the old game. I did try on each of those putts."

Jimenez was at 16-under 200 and will be paired with Els on Sunday.

Colin Montgomerie, ranked No. 63 and seeking to get into the top 50 to secure an invitation to the Masters, fired a 6-under 66 and trails by three.



Phil Mickelson, who has led nine consecutive rounds in stroke-play events, has played 36 holes at Doral in 14-under, one shot off the tournament record.

Han leads LPGA event in Mexico

HUIXQUILUCAN, Mexico — Annika Sorenstam shot a 2-under 70 on Friday in her first competitive round of the year, leaving her four strokes behind leader Hee-Won Han in the MasterCard Classic, the first LPGA Tour event in Mexico since 1975.

Moira Dunn trails the leader by two after a 68. Patricia Memiez-Lebouc, Brandie Burton, Giulia Sergas and Gloria Park opened with 69s, and Cristie Kerr and Carin Koch were in a group at 70.




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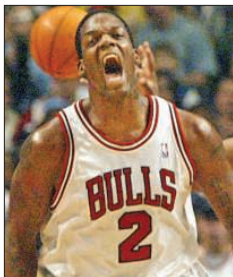




SPORTS



Race teams for Penske, Andretti figure to be front-runners during IRL season, Page 42



Center Eddy Curry, above, leads the Bulls in scoring with a 15.5-point per game average. Chicago's renaissance has been led by a defense that holds opponents to 42.2 percent shooting, second best in the NBA.

After an extended free fall into futility Chicago is excited about hoops again

BY NANCY ARMOUR
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Go to a Chicago Bulls game, and it's beginning to look like the good old days.

The United Center is rocking, with loud, passionate fans packing every seat. Even that third level of boxes, so high up in the rafters they may as well be on the roof, are occupied. Team gear is back in fashion, too. There's no shame in busting out that Bulls sweatshirt, and it's OK to replace an old-school Michael Jordan jersey with something more current.

After six years of mind-numbing futility, when the only thing left to play for at this time of year was avoiding last place, the Bulls have come roaring back. With one of the most remarkable turnarounds in the NBA, Chicago is on the verge of making the playoffs for the first time since 1998.

"The Bulls are so much fun to watch," said Mark Grogan, who brought his 12-year-old daughter, Eileen, and 10-year-old son, Patrick, to Tuesday night's game. "People are really excited."

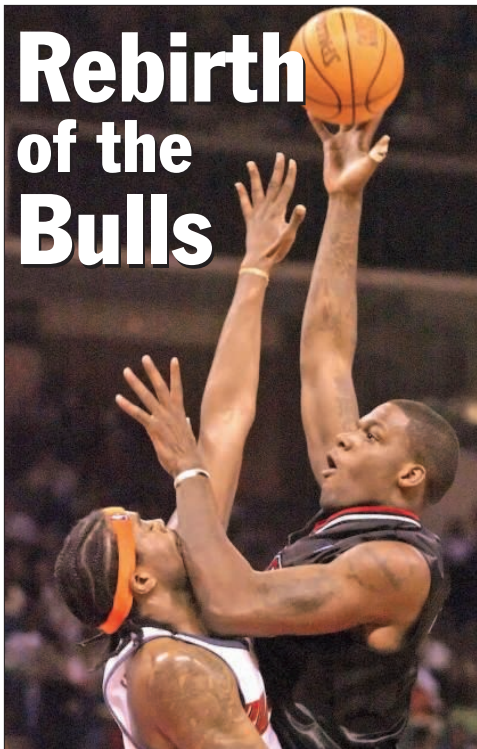
And, to be honest, a little stunned.

The Bulls have been abysmal since Jordan and friends won the last of Chicago's six NBA titles. They lost 341 games from 1999-2004, so inept they made even the Los Angeles Clippers look good. They're on their third coach since Phil Jackson left, and so many players have come and gone they could form their own league.

So when the Bulls began the year 0-9, matching the franchise record for the worst season-opening stretch, even some players thought, "Here we go again."

"I will admit I had that feeling," Tyson Chandler said. "But after we started winning, I knew we would consistently do so."

Rebirth of the Bulls



Chicago's Eddy Curry, right, shoots over Charlotte's Melvin Ely during a game last week. The Bulls (29-26) are one victory from matching their highest win total since Michael Jordan left the team.

The turning point came Nov. 24, when the Bulls beat the Utah Jazz. Not only was it their first victory, but it snapped Chicago's 37-game, six-year losing streak on its annual November western road trip.

"When we won that game, that gave us some confidence," rookie Ben Gordon said. "We got our first win in so-and-so years. That was something positive to build off of."

The Bulls won five straight in mid-December, their longest winning streak since Jordan's last season. They were 20-8 from Jan. 1 to March 1, second-best in the NBA behind only the defending champion Detroit Pistons.

With 29 victories heading into the weekend, they already had surpassed last year's total and were just one victory shy of matching their high-water mark in the post-Jordan era.

They entered the weekend as the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference.

Granted, the East is weak. But Chicago went 11-4 against Western Conference teams after that ugly November road trip. Included in that collection was the team's first victory at Dallas in eight years, and its first sweep of the Minnesota Timberwolves since the 1996-97 season.

"Even though we started off losing, it wasn't the same kind of losing that we had been doing the past three years and I definitely felt ... we still would, at some point, turn things around," Eddy Curry said. "Kind of hard to say I thought we'd be where we are now, but I definitely felt that we were moving in the right direction."

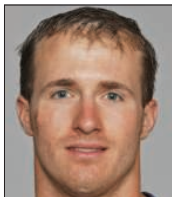
The Bulls didn't have much of an identity or a plan when general manager John Paxson

SEE REBIRTH ON PAGE 45



Webber's best game with Philly pushes 76ers over Cavs; Bryant's 40 points lift Lakers

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Brees' contract with Chargers is a big deal; Jets, Skins complete trade of WRs

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Mickelson mauls Doral, leads star-studded field by two shots

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Canseco set to testify about steroids on Capitol Hill

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